

LITC0035: Global Literature and the Climate Crisis

Instructor: Emily McGiffin

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Class time: Thursdays, 11:00 am to 1:00 pm

Class location: [IOE - Bedford Way \(20\) 777](#)

Module Description

'Global Literature and the Climate Crisis' has a twofold focus: on the one hand it explores prominent critical debates within literary-cultural studies that surround the concept of the Anthropocene; on the other hand, it examines how literature has given form to the challenges of representing climate change on a global scale. A first part of the course focuses on the term of the Anthropocene: that geological time in which human activities acquire significant consequences on the planet's ecosystems. It will discuss its effects on issues of periodisation and literary history, and on issues of critical and comparative analysis within global literature. We will continue by exploring critiques of the Anthropocene and investigating several of its alternatives (Capitalocene, Black Anthropocene, Misanthropocene, Chthulucene) to further inquire into issues of the relation between human and nature, the posthuman and the socio-economic consequences of ecological devastation. Throughout, these theoretical debates will be accompanied by analyses of literary texts: we will delve into the specifics of literary form, representation, and problems of geographical and historical scale.

Module Format

This module involves a two hour in-person teaching event each week at the time and place indicated above. These sessions will be supported by materials posted on the course Moodle. Classroom time will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of theories as well as discussions of the required readings. Students are expected to arrive prepared to discuss the course readings. See the worksheet "GLCC Reading Model" posted on Moodle for guidance on how to prepare for class discussions.

Module Learning Goals and Outcomes

By the end of the module, you should be able to:

- ⇒ describe crucial debates surrounding the Anthropocene and their implications for comparative literary study;
- ⇒ critically consider the broad parameters of the study of the Anthropocene as a mode of inquiry within a wide, international and cross-cultural domain;
- ⇒ be able to read closely and analytically a series of texts and other materials from a range of different cultures and traditions;
- ⇒ be able to make theoretically informed questions and arguments about the different challenges that environmental crises and conceptualisations of the Anthropocene pose for comparative literature and critical theory.

Assessment

Assessment for this module will be based on two assignments as follows:

Critical Analysis (25%): This 500-word assignment will be prepared and submitted over the course of our weekly seminars. After choosing one of the required texts to analyse, you will develop an argument about the text and use examples to support your argument. Due Monday, 13 November.

Term Essay (75%): At a length of 2500 words, this research essay will provide an original argument on one of the course texts, demonstrate knowledge of critical commentaries on the chosen narrative or a closely related subject, and show mastery of university-level argumentation and writing skills. Due Friday, 15 December.

General assignment specifications

Format: Unless otherwise specified, assignments should be typed in a non-decorative font, 1.5 spacing, with numbered pages and student's name in a header or footer. Submission to both Moodle and Turnitin is required; assignments will not be graded until both versions are received.

Late penalties: Assignments not received by the due date will be penalised according to UCL policy.

Revisions: Revisions will be permitted on a case-by-case basis. If you wish to revise and resubmit your assignment, please email me and describe in several sentences how you plan to improve your paper. The final grade on the assignment will be an average of the two marks.

Further details about both assignments are available on Moodle.

Required Texts

Books

1. Simon Orpana, *Gasoline Dreams*
2. Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*
3. Imbolo Mbue, *How Beautiful We Were*
4. Waubgeshig Rice, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*
5. Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Module Calendar

Week 1 (5 October): Welcome and Introduction
Required Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kyle Powers Whyte, Indigenous science (fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral dystopias and fantasies of climate change crises. <i>Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space</i> 2018 Vol. 1 Issue 1-2 Pages 224-242
Week 2 (12 October): Representing Slow Violence
Required Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rob Nixon, "Introduction." In <i>Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor</i>, 2011, Harvard University Press, pages 1-44.

Week 3 (19 October): This is Petroculture**Required Reading**

- Simon Orpana, *Gasoline Dreams*

Week 4 (26 October): Derangements and Literary Realism**Required Reading**

- Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*

Week 5 (2 November): Debating the Anthropocene**Required Reading**

- Kathryn Yusoff, Chapter 2: "Golden Spikes and Dubious Origins" from *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*
- Film: *Bamako*, dir. Abderrahmane Sissako (available at <https://resources.clie.ucl.ac.uk/home/sac/search/bamako/1>)

Week 6 (No Class): Reading Break

- No readings

Week 7 (16 November): Against Petroculture**ASSESSMENT: Critical Analysis due****Required Reading**

- Imbolo Mbue, *How Beautiful We Were*

Week 8 (23 November): Speculative Futures**Required Reading**

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Week 9 (30 November): Indigenous Climates**Required Reading**

- Waubgeshig Rice, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*

Week 10 (7 December): Indigenous Anthropocenes**Required Text**

- Icíar Bollaín (dir.), *Tambien la lluvia* (film available through UCL library)

Week 11 (14 December): Rewilding**ASSESSMENT DUE 15 December****Required Reading**

- Ellen Bass, "What Did I Love." From *Like a Beggar*.

Recommended Reading

- See multimedia texts posted on Moodle.

UCL Attendance Policy

The following is adapted from the UCL Academic Manual, available at ucl.ac.uk: Programmes of study at UCL are designed to ensure your learning is optimised and you have successful outcomes. Attendance at all scheduled teaching events is the best way to ensure you achieve your potential and to support your engagement and wellbeing. We recognise, however, that there are times when you may have to miss one or more teaching events (for example, because of illness). In this module, teaching events are mandatory. You must attend at least 8 out of 10 teaching events. Any additional undocumented absences will be reflected in your overall grade.

It is important that you attend teaching events punctually so as not to disrupt the learning of others. For some subjects, it will be vital that you arrive on time so that you are present for information that may be given at the start of a session, for example, health and safety instructions.

If you are an Undergraduate student, you must meet the minimum attendance requirements during UCL Term Times. Outside of term-time, there is no requirement for students to be present on campus or to notify absence.

RegisterUCL is UCL's attendance recording system and is linked to your timetable. You will need to register your attendance at each teaching event you attend, even where you have back-to-back events in the same room. You will be marked 'absent' if you do not register your attendance sometime in the window of 20 minutes before to 20 minutes after the timetabled start of a scheduled teaching event. Please keep your student ID card safe and always carry your ID card with you while on UCL premises. As well as providing proof of identity and controlling access to UCL buildings, this ensures that you can record your attendance at all timetabled sessions.

Student Support

UCL has a comprehensive set of student supports available at [UCL → Students → Support and Wellbeing](#). Please take particular note of the following:

Disabilities – UCL is an inclusive learning environment and aims to enable all students to study as independently as possible during their time here. A variety of adjustments, reasonable accommodations, and supports to suit your needs are available. For those who would like to explore these options, we recommend registering with the Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing team (DMHW) so that personalised support can be provided in a timely manner.

Wellness – Academic pressure and the particular challenges of living in or commuting to London can take a toll on our mental health and wellbeing. UCL offers a suite of support services specifically designed to help students excel at their studies even in challenging times and we urge you to explore these options.