

ARCH 105 / ENST 100
Environment, Culture, Society
Rice University, Fall 2021

Instructors:
JOSEPH CAMPANA (ENGL/ENST)
SOPHIE MOORE (ENST)
KEVIN MACDONNELL (ENST)

Description:

For decades, universities have featured courses, across disciplines and divisions, in environment and ecology. What's different now? While the activism of the 1970s sounded the clarion call of environmental calamity, it seems that the last few years have awakened, or re-awakened, a new sense of urgency around environmental problems. One core premise of this course, then, is that to study "Environment, Culture, and Society" now is to do so in a time of emergency. To do so is not only to consider climates and ecologies past (and sometimes lost) but also to imagine climates and ecologies to come.

Drawing from an array of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, arts and architecture, we will ask what it means to imagine worlds to come and explore what tools we might use to do so. The course will address core questions around processes of environmental change, their intersection with social, political, and economic transformations, and the ways that scholars, activists, and artists have taken up such questions. We will explore key terms (such as the anthropocene, environmental justice, sustainability, biodiversity, toxicity, waste, and geo/bio-engineering), which we will examine through some of the core approaches of environmental studies, including political ecology, environmental humanities, environmental history, environmental film and literature, and science and technology studies. This course satisfies the Division II requirement and core requirements for the ENST minor and ENVS major.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- to enhance familiarity with key questions, terms, and debates in environmental studies as approached through the humanities, architecture, and interpretive social sciences
- to understand a variety of disciplinary approaches to environmental and ecological questions
- to understand how distinctive disciplinary approaches come to be conversation with one another in the broad interdisciplinary context of environmental studies
- to enhance written, oral, and visual communication about environmental concerns

Required Assignments

- Everyone will complete all following assignments (group or individual). You will choose **6 of 8** completed assignments to submit as part of your final portfolio:

- **SUMBIOGRAPHY**
- **INVESTING IN FUTURES: Worlding Narrative (group)**
- **WHAT's in a NAME: NATURES, 'CENES, and more**
- **IMPLOSION PROJECT**
- **COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAP (group)**
- **WASTE**
- **TOXIC LEGACIES (MAP II)**
- **BIODIVERSITY & CREATURELY LIFE**
- Complete a **MID-SEMESTER SELF EVALUATION** in Week 8
- Complete **FINAL PORTFOLIO** of 6 short assignments, supplemented with a **FINAL REFLECTION**
- Complete **FINAL PROJECT**
- Complete a **FINAL SELF EVALUATION**

The eight shorter **assignments** will be evaluated for completion. Your **FINAL GRADE** will be the consequence of your thoughtful and rigorous engagement in completing the final portfolio, final project, the mid semester self-evaluation, and the final self-evaluation.

Course Schedule

Week 1: INTRODUCTIONS

Tuesday, August 24: NO CLASS AS PER RICE POLICY

Thursday, August 26: FIRST CLASS

What, where, and when is environmental studies?

- Read '[A lifetime of damage' on a creosote plume in Houston's Fifth Ward](#)

Week 2: Natures & Ecological Change

Tuesday, August 31: What's in a name? Nature, Environment, Wilderness

Background Reading:

- Warde, et. al. *The Environment: A History of the Idea* (chp 1)
- William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness"
- Selections from the Ecopian Lexicon: Qi, Sila, Heyiya (choose 1)

Thursday, September 2

Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene

- Read "Who Is the We in 'We Are Causing Climate Change?'" *Slate* article, 2018 <https://slate.com/technology/2018/10/who-is-we-causing-climate-change.html>
- Skim IPCC 2021 Summary for Policymakers
- Read Davis, Janae, Alex A. Moulton, Levi Van Sant, and Brian Williams. 2019. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises." *Geography Compass* 13 (5).

Week 3: Investing in Futures (VIRTUAL WEEK - in sections)

Tuesday, September 7

Thursday, September 9

Week 4: Writing Climate Change: Sci-Fi/Cli-Fi with Amitav Ghosh

Tuesday, September 14: CONVERSATION WITH AMITAV GHOSH in class

- Read selection from *Great Derangement*

Thursday, September 16:

Read for class conversation **in sections**:

- Read "**Intro**," and then choose one of these two stories: "The Rememberers" (Rachel Heng; Singapore) or "The Night Drinkers" (Luis Alberto Urrea; Mexico City) from *Mc Sweeney's 58: 2040 A.D.* (CANVAS)
- selection from Kim Stanley Robinson, [NY 2140](#)
- Debate on Cli-Fi @ NYTimes: "[The Power of Climate Fiction](#)"
- [Matthew Schneider-Myerson, "The Influence of Climate Fiction: An Empirical Survey of Readers."](#)

[Environmental Humanities \(2018\) 10 \(2\): 473–500](#)

Week 5: Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism

Tuesday, September 21

In class: discussion with Political Science / Environmental Studies major Taylor Gilliam

- Watch [What is EJ? Planet Now! Webinar \(2020\)](#)
- Read "Introduction" in Lipsitz, George. 2011. *How Racism Takes Place*.
- Explore [EJ Atlas](#) online; choose one project that interests you to discuss in class on Thursday.

Thursday, September 23

In class: start **Collaborative Environmental Justice Map assignment**

Prepare for discussion **in sections**:

- Watch "[Geographies of Racial Capitalism](#)" with Dr. Ruth Wilson Gilmore (16 min video).
- Explore [Deep South Center for Environmental Justice](#) website
 - Read [Climate Action Equity Report](#)

Optional viewing:

- *Trouble the Water* (96 min. Katrina documentary; available via Kanopy)
 - Watch trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cq426VjZD1E>
 - Watch film <https://rice.kanopy.com/video/trouble-water-1>

Week 6: Methods & Approaches

Tuesday, September 28: Anticolonial Scientific Practice

In class: virtual visit from [CLEAR](#) member [Christina Maria Crespo](#)

Thursday, September 30: Political Ecology

Prepare for discussion **in sections**:

- Pellow, David N. 2016. "Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 13 (2): 221–36.

Optional reading:

Middleton, Beth Rose. 2015. "Jahát Jat'totòdom: Toward an Indigenous Political Ecology." In *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*, 561–74.

Week 7: Waste (Discard Studies)

DUE: WASTE assignment

Tuesday, October 5: What, where, and when is waste? (**ENTIRE CLASS**)

Reading:

- Choose one of the following three aspects of "waste" (things, people, land):
 - Michael Thompson, from *Rubbish Theory* (things)
 - Zygmunt Bauman, from *Wasted Lives* (people)
 - Tracy Voyles, from *Wastelanding* or Vittoria di Palma, from *Wasteland: A History* (land)

Thursday, October 7: **IN SECTIONS** Where is waste? What is *your* waste?

- Watch film [*Pepe*](#) (24 min; 2007)

Reading:

- Choose one of the following three locales for waste:
 - Greg Grandin, "Empire's Ruins: from Detroit to the Amazon"
 - Rosalind Fredericks, from *Garbage Citizenship: Vital Infrastructures of Labor in Dakar, Senegal*
 - Kathleen Millar, from *Reclaiming the Discarded: Life and Labor on Rio's Garbage Dum*

Week 8: Extraction

Tuesday, October 12: NO CLASS (Midterm recess)

Thursday, October 14:

- In class: **meet in sections** to prepare for **Implosion Project assignment**
- Read Vergès, Françoise. 2016. [*Bananas: Racism, Sex, and Capitalism. THE FUNAMBULIST MAGAZINE*](#), no. 06 (December).

Optional reading:

- Dumit, Joseph. 2014. Writing the Implosion: Teaching the World One Thing at a Time. *Cultural Anthropology*, 29(2), 344–362.

Week 9: Implosion & Extraction

Tuesday, October 19

- **In class:** Meet in sections to discuss Implosion Projects

Thursday, October 21: **ENTIRE CLASS**

- Read Whyte, Kyle. 2018. Settler colonialism, ecology, and environmental injustice. *Environment and Society*, 9(1), 125–125–144.
- Watch Keystone XL (East Texas) documentary [*Above All Else*](#) (2014; 97 minutes), available on Kanopy.
- Watch Snotty Nose Rez Kids Ft. Drezus [*Indigenous Resistance*](#) music video

Week 10: Toxic Legacies

Tuesday, October 26: **ENTIRE CLASS**

- TBD: Visit with Matthew Tejada, Director of Environmental Justice, EPA

Thursday, October 28: **IN SECTIONS**

Materials for this week:

- Alexis Shotwell, from *Against Purity*
- Max Liboiron, from *Pollution is Colonialism*

- Consult and become familiar with the following sites:
 - [ToxicSites](#)
 - [EPA National Priorities List \(Superfund\)](#)
 - [Harris County](#)

Week 11: Biodiversity & Creaturely Life

Tuesday, November 2: Methods in ENST: "Animal" Studies **ENTIRE CLASS**

- Background for lecture: read one of these
 - Christopher Stone, "Should Trees Have Standing?"
 - Thomas Nagel, "What is It Like to be a Bat?"

Thursday, November 4: **IN SECTIONS**

- Choose one of these:
 - Linda Hogan, from *The Radiant Lives of Animals*
 - Robin Wall Kimmerer, from *Braiding Sweetgrass*
- Choose one of these selections from *Animalia: An Anti-Imperial Bestiary*:
 - Ape; Dog; Mosquito; Horse

Week 12: Agriculture & Regenerative Farming

Readings for the week:

- Read McCutcheon, Priscilla. 2020. "[Prophetic Black Ecologies: Liberatory Agriculture on Beulah Land Farms](#)." AAIHS (blog). July 27, 2020.
- Read excerpts from White, Monica M. 2018. *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*.
- Watch [The Future of Food Justice](#) webinar
- Read [The Red Deal: An Indigenous Manual to Decolonize and Heal the Earth](#)

Tuesday, November 9

- GROUP 1 visits Rice community gardens (details TBA)

Thursday, November 11

- GROUP 2 visits Rice community gardens (details TBA)

Week 13: Geo/Bio-Engineering

Tuesday, November 16: **IN SECTIONS** Conversation based on webinar, garden visits, & materials for Weeks 12 & 13

Readings for the week:

- Holly Buck, "Introduction" and "Regenerating" from *After Geoengineering*

Thursday, November 18:

Meet in the **ENTIRE CLASS** Zoom for a virtual visit from founder of [Finca Tres Robles](#) and [Small Places](#), Tommy Garcia-Prats.

Week 14:

Tuesday, November 23: FINAL PROJECTS TBA

Thursday, November 25: RECESS: NO CLASS

Week 15: CONCLUSIONS / FINAL PROJECTS

Tuesday, November 30: FINAL PROJECTS TBA

Thursday, December 2: FINAL PROJECTS TBA