

# English 265A – Introduction to Environmental Humanities

## *Words & Worlds: Language, Landscape & the Power of Story in Contemporary Environmental Literature*

### Spring Quarter 2019

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Instructor: Jessica Holmes  
Location/Time: Monday/Wednesday 10:30-12:20 CMU B006  
Office: Padelford A11-A  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: [holmes07@uw.edu](mailto:holmes07@uw.edu)  
Class Website: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1273088>

## Course Description

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“...it seems to me more productive to think inclusively of environmentality as a property of any text—to maintain that all human artifacts bear such traces, and at several stages: in the composition, the embodiment, and the reception.”  
-Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*

We live in a world of stories. From the films we watch, to the political debates continuously reshaping national identities, to the cultural histories we pass down through generations, to the feeds on our Instagram and Twitter apps, stories transform and are transformed by the very nature of our existence. In a time of environmental crisis, social and political upheaval, globalization, mass consumption, species extinction and widespread poverty, what is the relationship between language and the world? This course will seek to interrogate such a question and to consider (through the practice of reading and writing) how this relationship shapes our understanding and use of texts. Readings will include a range of environmentally-focused contemporary works (including novels, poems, essay and films) in an effort to invite students to investigate the relevance of language to landscape, to think through questions of genre, technique and audience, and to identify their own personal stakes within a body of literature. Topics will include evolving discussions of climate change, environmental justice, human/non-human relations, and the Anthropocene, with particular emphasis on environmental justice and the unequal distribution of environmental crises, both globally and along class, race, gender and species lines. Students will also be asked to periodically consider the affective dimensions of problems such as climate change and environmental catastrophe.

## Course Texts & Materials

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- ✓ A notebook of your choice – to be used for class notes and journaling. Please bring to class daily.
- ✓ A folder for keeping any handouts, extra readings or assignments.
- ✓ Access to course website (Canvas). I will post materials here and most major assignments will be turned in via Canvas.
- ✓ Internet access and an active UW Net ID and email account which you check daily.

Course texts:

\*ISBN's are listed here, but any edition of texts will suffice.

- ✓ *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*  
Author: Wallace-wells, David  
ISBN: 978-0525576709
- ✓ *Red Alert!: Saving The Planet With Indigenous Knowledge*  
Author: Wildcat, Daniel

- ISBN: 978-1555916374
- ✓ *The Cow With Ear Tag #1389*  
Author: Gillespie, Kathryn  
ISBN: 978-0226582856
- ✓ *Tender: Stories*  
Author: Samatar, Sofia  
ISBN: 9781618731654
- ✓ *Oryx And Crake*  
Author: Atwood, Margaret  
ISBN: 978-0385721677
- ✓ *Emotional Resiliency In The Era Of Climate Change: A Clinicians Guide*  
Author: Davenport, Leslie  
ISBN: 978-1785927195
- ✓ Course Reader – available at Rams Copy Center - 4144 University Way NE

## Assessment

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| Participation   | 20% |
| Journal entries | 10% |
| Short essay #1  | 20% |
| Short essay #2  | 20% |
| Final Paper     | 30% |

### Note on participation:

Participation includes contributing to class discussions and activities, daily pre- and post-class freewrites, engaging in group work, providing thoughtful peer feedback when appropriate, 3 tri-weekly journals, 1 group presentation and attending 1 extracurricular environmental event (“EEE”). I expect you to be consistently prepared for class, text in hand, and active in all discussions. This includes active listening as well as oral participation. If it becomes clear you are not completing assigned readings, this will also impact your participation grade.

### Attendance policy:

Each student will be granted 1 excused absence *without* giving the instructor prior warning and 1 excused absence *with* prior warning (at least 24 hours’ notice). If extenuating circumstances cause you to miss more than two days of class, please discuss with me directly at your earliest convenience. Furthermore, if you miss class at any time, I expect you to see me or email me to discuss make-up work and upcoming deadlines. Unless we have discussed otherwise, you will still be held accountable for the assignments for that day. Repeated tardiness will also negatively impact your participation grade. Each student will be granted one excused tardy (no more than 10 minutes late to class). Any additional tardy will count as an unexcused absence. The *peer review workshop* day is worth triple participation points. If you need to miss class on the peer review workshop day (Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May), please discuss with me at least one week in advance.

Late papers: Late papers are accepted but will not receive instructor feedback. 10% of the grade will be deducted for each day past the deadline. Incomplete papers will not be accepted. If extenuating circumstances apply, you may request an extension for any assignment ahead of time (at least 24 hours before the due date). I will accept/reject such requests on a case-by-case basis.

## Policies & Expectations

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Because the exchange of ideas is so important to this class, it is crucial that we respect one another. There will likely be differing points of view offered up in class discussions. Differences can and should be discussed, but

these discussions should maintain an academic spirit of respect. Derogatory or discourteous language and behavior will not be tolerated in our classroom.

During the animal agriculture unit of the course, there will be some explicit video content shown in class (i.e. slaughterhouse footage). I will give the class ample warning. Please discuss with me in advance if you would prefer not to watch such content and I will make other arrangements for you to earn participation points during this small portion of the class.

Please turn off all **cell phones** and any other electronic gadgets before coming to class. If you feel the need to answer a call or send a text, you will be asked to leave class and this will count as an unexcused absence. Use of **laptops or tablets** is not permitted in class unless cleared with the instructor (and then should only be used for coursework). Please do not wear earphones during class (even if there is nothing playing on them).

Please check your university email account regularly as I will send out announcements and updates via email. Outside of office hours, email is the best way to get in touch with me. While there is no need to be overly formal, please keep your emails professional and respectful in nature. Use correct grammar and avoid “chat-speak.”

## Writing Resources

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I encourage you to take advantage of the following writing resources available to you at no charge.

- ✓ Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC)  
Appointment required.  
Hours: Sunday 12pm to 9pm, Monday-Thursday 9am to 9pm, and Friday 9am to 3pm  
Website: [depts.washington.edu/owrc](http://depts.washington.edu/owrc)
- ✓ CLUE Writing Center (in Mary Gates Hall)  
No appointment necessary. Arrive early and expect a short wait.  
Hours: Sunday-Thursday 7:00pm-midnight

## Academic Integrity

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Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else’s ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people’s thoughts and writing—as long as you credit them. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

## Accommodations

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If you need accommodation of any sort, please let me know so that I can work with the UW Disability Resources for Students Office (DRS) to provide what you require. More information about accommodation may be found at <http://www.washington.edu/students/drs/>.

## Concerns

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If you have any concerns about the course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact Jesse Oak Taylor (Director of Undergraduate Programs) at [jot8@uw.edu](mailto:jot8@uw.edu).

## Course Calendar (tentative)

Week 1      Mon 1 April      Introduction environmental humanities & review of syllabus

### *Climate Change & The Anthropocene*

Wed 3 April      *The Human Planet*, Introduction (Reader, p.1-16)  
*Emotional Resiliency in the Era of Climate Change*, Introduction (p.19-30)

Week 2      Mon 8 April      *The Uninhabitable Earth*, Part 1-2 (p.1-141)  
“It Only Takes a Few Years...” (Reader, p.17-18)

Wed 10 April      *The Uninhabitable Earth*, Part 3 (p.142-217)  
“Climate Change is Threatening Mental Health” (Reader, p.19-20)  
**Journal entry #1 due**

Week 3      Mon 15 April      *The Uninhabitable Earth*, Part 4 (p.218-229)  
“Slow Violence” (Reader, 21-30)

### *Indigenous Perspectives*

Wed 17 April      *Red Alert!* Introduction & Chapters 1-3 (p.1-55)  
“Climate Change Ain’t the First Existential Threat” (Reader, p.31-35)  
Watch “Rise” - collaborative poem featured here:  
<https://350.org/rise-from-one-island-to-another/>  
Be sure to watch but you can also follow along with the text on p. 36-43 of the reader.

Week 4      Mon 22 April      *Red Alert!* Chapters 4-5 (p.56-99)  
**Short Paper #1 Due**

Wed 24 April      *Red Alert!* Chapters 6-7 & Conclusion (p.100-139)  
“The Land Ethic” (Reader p.44-57)

### *Animal Agriculture*

Week 5      Mon 29 April      *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*, Chapters 1-4 (p.1-94)  
**Journal entry #2 due**

Wed 1 May      *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*, Chapters 5-7 (p.95-167)  
[*Conspiracy* - watch in class]

Week 6      Mon 6 May      *The Cow with Ear Tag #1389*, Chapters 8-9 (p.168-219)  
Reines poetry exerpts (Reader p.60-63)

Wed 8 May      [*Dominion* – watch in class]

Week 7      Mon 13 May      Bradfield poems (Reader p.58-59)  
**Journal entry #3 due**

### *Nuclear Energy*

Wed 15 May      *Tender* – selected story (TBD)  
Reines poem: “A Cleaner, Safer World” (Reader p.64-66)  
**Short Paper #2 Due**

Week 8      Mon 20 May      *Tender* - selected story (TBD)  
“Wild and Scenic Wasteland” (Reader p.67-83)

### *Resilience & Future Worlds*

Wed 22 May      *Oryx and Crake*, Chapters 1-4 (p.1-92)

Week 9      Mon 27 May      *No class (Memorial Day)* – read & work on final paper draft!

Wed 29 May      *Oryx and Crake*, Chapters 5-10 (p.93-261)  
**Rough draft of final paper due (print copies for your group members)**

Week 10      Mon 3 June      *Oryx and Crake*, Chapters 11-13 (p.262-354)  
**Peer Review Workshop**

Wed 5 June      *Oryx and Crake*, Chapters 14-15 (p.355-374)  
“I’m Just More Afraid of Climate Change...” (Reader p.84-97)

Final Paper due Mon 10 June, 5pm

## Key deadlines & Writing Assignments

**Short Paper #1** (3-5 pages, DS)

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April

**Short Paper #2** (3-5 pages DS)

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May

**Final Paper** (5-7 pages DS)

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June, 5pm

**Tri-Weekly Journal Entry** (1 page SS)

Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May

**Group Presentation**

Sign-up sheet to circulate 1<sup>st</sup> week of class

**Extracurricular Environmental Event (EEE)**

1-page (SS) reflection due on last day of class; but you may turn it in any time during the quarter.

Some options for EEE are listed below. You are not limited to these; you may choose any event you would like to attend as long as it relates to course content in some way. I'll post this list to Canvas so we can keep adding to it as new events pop up!

- 2nd-26<sup>th</sup> April "Wild Washington" Earth Day Exhibit at UW Libraries, Allen Library, North lobby + Friday films shown at 1pm (see website)
- Tues 9<sup>th</sup> April, 7-9pm "Salmon People: Northwest Native Opposition to Genetically Engineered Fish, Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute 104 17<sup>th</sup> Ave S, Seattle 98144, \$5
- Thur 11<sup>th</sup> April, 12:30-1:20pm Environmental Health Seminar: "New Refrigerants to Address Climate Change: Risk, Perception and Politics." Magnuson Health Sciences Center, HSB T435.
- Thur 11<sup>th</sup> April, 7:30-8:30pm "A Brief History of Environmental Successes" featuring Dr. Susan Solomon, Kane Hall 2010 (free but need to register online!)
- Thurs 11<sup>th</sup> April, 7pm "Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Lack of Transparency and Inequities in Compensation," Dorceta Taylor. Kane Hall. Free but RSVP online.
- Sat 20<sup>th</sup> April, 12-2:30pm Pasado's Safe Haven Sanctuary Tour (\$25, lunch included, transport needed – Monroe, WA - 45 minutes away, registration required)
- Thur 25<sup>th</sup> April, 7:30-9:30pm "Confronting the Extinction Crisis," Kane Hall.
- Tues 28<sup>th</sup> May, 7-8:30pm "Depressed About Climate Change? Moving from Angst to Action in an Age of Ecological Disruption," Jennifer Atkinson. UW Bothell campus, Haynes' Hall. Free.