

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

**English 517.92-01 Theoretical and Cultural Studies:
Literature and the Anthropocene**

Winter 2016

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Classes: M/W 14:00 to 15:15 (2:00 to 3:15 p.m.)
EDC 172

Office hours: Wednesday 3:30 to 4:30

“Do unto those downstream as you would have those upstream do unto you.”
— American farmer, poet, novelist and nonfiction writer [Wendell Berry](#)

In this course we will read texts pertaining to living in the Anthropocene, the era of human-caused changes to planetary ecosystems. We will examine texts about such fundamental and pressing environmental subjects as climate change, water, food and food security, energy, plants, wild animals, pandemic, and democracy. What will North America be like in the not-so-distant future? Will we have enough clean water, healthy food and energy to live in relative comfort? Will there still be some wild animals and wilder places? Do we really understand what the effects of living during the Sixth Great Extinction are and will be? What new (or old) ideas, ethics and aesthetics might help us live on, and which ones do we need to dismantle and abandon as soon as possible? What literary and cultural texts can help us develop healthier relationships with the ecosystems that underwrite our existence? How can interdisciplinary approaches be incorporated into our critical and professional practices in the arts and humanities? Topics for discussion will include questions pertaining to climate change, subjectivity, community, bioregionalism, globalization, pandemic, food and food security, water, indigeneity, extinctions, materiality, animality, slow violence, activism, and resilience.

Required Texts:

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (novel): post-apocalypse

J.B. MacKinnon, *The Once and Future World: Nature As It Was, As It Is, As It Could Be* (nonfiction):
extirpation and extinction of species; the big picture

Barbara Kingsolver, *Flight Behavior* (novel): monarch butterflies, climate change, multi-species
communities

Fred Stenson, *Who By Fire* (novel): energy; oil/gas

Annabel Soutar, *Seeds* (documentary play; verbatim theatre): corporate agriculture; genetically modified food; the Percy Schmeiser legal case

Charlotte Gill, *Eating Dirt: Deep Forests, Big Timber and Life with the Tree-Planting Tribe* (nonfiction): tree planting, manual labour, restoration

Lydia Millet, *How the Dead Dream* (novel): money, development, human-animal relationships

A good grammar, punctuation and style handbook such as (but not restricted to) *The MLA Handbook*.

Assignment Portfolio:

During the course we will compile an anthology, manual or manifesto for the Anthropocene. We will need a good title, a glossary of terms, critical and/or theoretical essays, a collective manifesto, and resources for further exploration (I will supply the bibliography I've been working on, and we can also add to it during the course). At very least, we will hope to assemble the project as a single physical or digital document, but it would be great to create a website, if we have or can acquire the necessary expertise, out of these materials so that our work can go public.

The Table of Contents will include the following:

- ❖ a glossary of terms
- ❖ a collectively written manifesto that includes 1) a clear statement of the problem and an overview of the context, 2) a passionate call to action, 3) a statement on the role and function of the arts and/or literature and literary theory in the Anthropocene and/or 4) a short essay on methodologies for critical-theoretical and interdisciplinary engagement with the Anthropocene
- ❖ your critical or theoretical essays.

1. Terms for a glossary for the Anthropocene (each student will contribute glossary entries for TWO terms from the list provided by the instructor, 2 – 4 pp. each, due week 5): 20%
2. Editing of and written commentary (1 - 2 pp.) on the assembled glossary (due week 4 to the class/week 5 to me): 5%
3. 'Objects' for study: 25% (due once a week during the course starting in week 2)
4. Research essay (12 – 15 pp.) : 25% (due week 10)
5. Collectively written manifesto (about 8 - 10 pp.): 25% (due week 12)

TOTAL 100%

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Students must complete and submit in timely fashion ALL of the assignments in order to be eligible for a passing grade for the course.

Your mark will be based entirely on your course work: there will be no final examination in this course.

In addition to the topics and questions listed above, the primary research question governing and structuring this course is how those of us in the arts disciplines, and particularly literature and critical-theoretical and cultural studies, can play a significant role in saving the earth and its inhabitants from the ravages of climate change and other major problems associated with the Anthropocene or at least mitigating and adapting to its worst effects. What tools do we have, what tools do we need, and how do we get started immediately?

The structural metaphor for the course will be that of the working group or the roundtable. An even better metaphor might be that of the hive (although on the surface the course may appear not unlike most other seminar courses – the same skills of accurate and thoughtful reading practices, original research, and oral and written expression will be carried out within the conceit of the working group / hive). We will enhance our traditional skillset with an ethic of and practice in the skills of collaboration and collective enterprise.

Should we decide collectively to create a website from our course work, here is a link to Drupal web creation via UofC: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/web-content-management-wcm>

A collective glossary for the Anthropocene (20%).

The purpose of this assignment is to gather intelligence about the subject of the Anthropocene and to create a vocabulary for discussing it. If we lack appropriate terminology, we cannot work toward a clear understanding of the problem or come up with solutions. What do we need to know in order to persist into the future, what knowledge can we share with others, and how can we share it? Each student will draw two terms randomly from the list provided by the instructor the first week of class. Each glossary entry will be fairly comprehensive (2 - 3 pp.) and include definition(s) and description of the term; its context or background, usage and implications. In other words, what does the term signify, how is it used and what is its value with respect to learning to survive in the Anthropocene?

One model for this assignment (to be provided in class) is Barry Lopez, ed., *Home Ground: Language for an American Landscape*, a glossary of the terms used (by Americans) to describe land, landscape, geography, and particular kinds of places. For a more extensive model, please see (but, obviously, do not copy) the entries to date in the “Living Lexicon” at the *Environmental Humanities Journal*: <http://environmentalhumanities.org/lexicon/>

Editing and commentary (5%): Students will edit the glossary before submission, and provide written commentary/feedback on the entries. Each student will then revise, if necessary, her entries before submitting them to the instructor. This will give you some practice in editing and collaborating prior to working together on your manifesto.

Objects for study: 25%

Class meets twice a week. Once each week, each student will bring to class an ‘object’ or other material contribution that facilitates and deepens our learning and the gathering of knowledge for that week. The ‘object’ must be relevant and well-chosen to correlate with the course outline, course schedule, readings, and topics for that week. The object might be a critical or theoretical article about the text(s) of the week that the student has read, an especially insightful review of it, a pertinent interview with the author about that book or the writing of it, a short video or audio clip (either found or perhaps even made by the student herself), a pertinent news article, a website, a map, a physical object or artifact, an experience connected with the week’s topic, something gleaned from The Daily Anthropocene or Twitter, other. Students will incorporate their individual contributions into the class discussion for that week. For the sake of organization and time, we may divide it up so that half the class presents their materials on Monday and half on Wednesday.

Be curious, be creative, and take responsibility for enhancing our learning and class time (in other words, don’t just go through the mechanical motion of dragging something to class). Think of a pie chart with the topic and text(s) of the week in a small circle at the center, and each of us bringing something to bear on them. Or think of the spokes of a wheel, if you prefer. Or you might want to think of what to provide each week as a kind of ‘gift’ to the community of the class or as a way of teaching some aspect of a given class. Or as a mini-oral presentation each week in lieu of a thirty- to forty-five minute presentation.

The goals of this assignment are to encourage diverse knowledge-gathering practices (a.k.a. research), to facilitate and ease everyone into avid class participation, to bring to our awareness resources and information both from our own and other disciplines on the subject of the anthropocene, to diversify the kinds of materials we consider research, and to alter somewhat the normative hierarchy and dynamic within classroom settings. What novel kinds of ‘things’ can we bring to bear on texts?

For example, while we are studying the novel *Flight Behavior* one person might bring in a news report about the current situation for monarch butterflies and convey that information clearly to the group. Another might have some observations about representations of teenagers and pregnancy in some other text(s) they have read (teen pregnancy is a key issue in *Flight Behavior*). Someone else might have read something about poverty in relation to climate change. A fourth person might bring in an insightful review of the novel. Someone else might have a photograph and information about the particular milkweed plant that is crucial for monarch butterfly larvae. Someone else might be curious about the economic situation in the state where the events of the novel take place.

Or, when we are studying Charlotte Gill’s memoir of treeplanting, maybe one of you has a friend or acquaintance who is a tree-planter. Invite him or her to come to class that week.

The objects for study must be offered to the class during class so you must be in attendance to do so.

Research essay (12 to 15 pp. including works cited) 25%

A research essay that contains no research is not one, and will receive a grade no higher than 50%. Although it is difficult to specify a precise number of highly pertinent scholarly articles that must be interpolated into and taken up in the essay, four would be the minimum, and they must be full

scholarly articles (though you can certainly also incorporate other materials as well such as quotations from book reviews, interviews and so forth).

Collectively written manifesto (25%) that includes 1) a clear statement and overview of the problem of the Anthropocene, 2) a passionate call to action, 3) a statement on the role and function of the arts and/or literature and literary theory in the Anthropocene and/or 4) a short essay on methodologies for critical-theoretical and interdisciplinary engagement with the Anthropocene.

Resources:

Please see my Anthropocene Bibliography on D2L for a sense of this field of research, resources for your research papers and inspiration.

Page lengths for written assignments are calculated on the following basis: All written assignments must be double-spaced in 12-point font with 1” margins on all four sides of the page.

Late penalties: Late penalties will be deducted for late assignments. Late penalties can and sometimes do result in a failing grade on an assignment so students will want to start assignments well in advance of any due date. **The late penalty for written work is one mark per day late.** That is, if an assignment merits a 20/25 (80%, A-) but comes in two days late, the mark will drop two marks to 18/25 (76%, B). This measure is in place in order to ensure a level playing field for everyone in the course.

This course will be conducted as a mixture of lecture, class and group discussion, groupwork, , readings, and other forms of learning. Respectful participation in all class-time activities, not just lectures, is compulsory. An important part of intellectual work is being able to speak about it with others. There is no point in hoarding your insights by keeping them solely to yourself: the world needs them, as we shall see as we read and think about the course materials. In short, students will be expected to assume the role of active participants in the construction and dissemination of knowledge rather than that of merely passive consumers of it. This includes participation in discussion and in credit-free assignments and activities carried out during class time.

A strong commitment to class attendance, completing the assigned readings in advance of the class for which they are scheduled, avidly participating in all class and group discussions and in-class exercises and activities, demonstrating respectful and open intellectual engagement with the course materials and with fellow students and the professor are highly valued. Intermittent attendance (more than a couple of absences per term) *always* results in losing one’s place in terms of the material and the others in the course. We will have a lot of fascinating material to talk about, work on and play with in this course! Think of a course as a community of living, thinking, responding, researching, knowledge-creating beings.

Recent research studies have shown that handwritten class notes are markedly superior in terms of acquiring a more thorough understanding of course material and for retention of material in one’s memory. The instructor reserves the right to outlaw the use of phones, tablets and computers in class. Surfing the web, checking email or social media, or taking calls or texting during class is strictly forbidden!!

Along similar lines, I highly recommend that you annotate and underline the primary course texts (preferably in paper, but you can annotate in ebook and electronic articles in formats such as the Kindle application). Don't try to preserve pristine copies of your texts for resale to other students who will underline and annotate and therefore do better than you did in the course! Underlining and annotating in the margins are the best ways of acquiring and consolidating your knowledge of textual material. Studying is also vastly easier and more efficient if you have already 'made tracks' in your text (though not, of course, in any library books ever).

Please do not attempt to read the assigned materials on your phone! You cannot possibly ingest the texts on a screen as small as that of a phone. Just as visual arts courses examine the quality of the paint strokes in a painting or the forms in clay, literary studies are based on engagement with the language of the text. We are not studying course materials for an entire term simply in order to extract "the main idea" or "the general drift" of a text! We will be focussing on what is actually on the page. For the same reason, you must bring the assigned readings of the week to class. If you don't bring the text of the day to class, you are completely missing the point of literary studies. (It would be not unlike leaving your frog for dissection home during biology class.)

Sources of information about literary readings, festivals and book launches include the English Department website, in-class announcements, *Sverve Magazine* (published with the Friday edition of the *Calgary Herald*), and individual bookstore's websites (see ShelfLife and Pages Books, for example).

There will be no extra credit assignments or opportunities to re-do and resubmit your work. That being said, if you need some help or advice with anything course-related, please visit me in my office during my office hours above, and I will be very pleased to assist you.

Double-sided printing of assignments is highly encouraged in order to save paper and trees. Please feel free to use factory-recycled paper or even paper that has already been used on one side only. This is not only permissible but admirable. Just draw a line diagonally through the material printed or written on the "wrong" side and make sure your pages are stapled in order.

Please **DO NOT** use any plastic cover sheets for your assignments. They have an annoying tendency to flap shut while one is trying to read them, and using plastic contributes to waste, pollution and excess carbon. Just a simple staple in the upper left-hand corner of the page is perfect. Please staple your work before handing it in. I do not normally carry a stapler with me to and from class.

Written assignments are due at the beginning of class on their respective due dates, and they must be physically handed to the instructor. At this point, I cannot accept any electronic submissions (which is too bad as it would save paper and trees). If you absolutely cannot hand me your work in class, then do not shove your professional work under my (or anyone else's) office door. It can and does get trampled, lost, put under the wrong professor's door, etc. Instead hand them in via the English Dept. office between 8:30 and 4:30 (the office is closed from 12:00 to 1:00) or the Essay Drop Box just outside the English Department office. Assignments are date-stamped by the office staff at about 4:00 so if you have a strict deadline you should submit your work before 4:00.

NOTE: The English Office is on the 11th floor of the Social Sciences Bldg.

In this course, final grades will be marked on the University of Calgary's four-point Undergraduate Grading System, as described in the Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>

A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

All individual assignments will receive a numerical grade and can be converted using the following scale:

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the 4-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events <http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>.

Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<http://www.enough.utoronto.ca/computeruse/eetiquette.htm>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboym@ucalgary.ca
Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:**Academic regulations and schedules:**

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Student Accommodations:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to

instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:
Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:
Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:
arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):
"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys."

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:
 - (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
 - (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
 - (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
 - (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff". Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.