

**ENGL 517.02 Advanced Seminar in Theoretical and Cultural Studies:
Literature and the Anthropocene**

**CNST 591.01 Senior Seminar in Canadian Studies:
Canada in the Anthropocene**

Dr. Banting

Classes: Thursdays 2:00 to 4:45 (classes meet once a week) (2 hours, 45 minutes)

Classroom: SS 1153

My Office: SS 1010, 403.220.5480; pbanting@ucalgary.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00 to 2:00 (any necessary changes will be announced in class)

In this course we will read texts pertaining to life in the Anthropocene, the era of human-caused changes to planetary ecosystems. What will Canada be like in the very near future? Will we have a sufficiently stable climate, abundant clean water, healthy food, energy, and sociopolitical cohesion to live in relative comfort? In what ways do our visions of Canada as a nation further or hinder our response to climate breakdown? In what ways does the Anthropocene require us to reconsider or reimagine human relationships to place, to each other, to other life forms, and to power? Will there still be wild animals and wild places? How does it feel to be alive during the Sixth Great Extinction? Topics for analysis and discussion may include theories and literature of the Anthropocene, global climate change, energy, bioregionalism, community, indigeneity, traditional ecological knowledges, subjectivity, wild weather, social chaos, food and food security, water, infrastructure, pandemic, animals and extinctions, materiality, slow violence, and resilience. How, in short, can we develop healthier relationships with the ecosystems that underwrite our very existence and survival before it is too late? Which new (or old) ideas, stories, ethics, and practices might help us live on, and which ones do we need to dismantle or abandon? How do the arts and humanities help us envision alternate ways of living? How can interdisciplinary approaches be incorporated into our practices in the arts, humanities and social sciences?

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*

Barry Lopez, *The Rediscovery of North America*

Sue Goyette, *Ocean*

Richard Wagamese, *One Story, One Song*

J.B. MacKinnon, *The Once and Future World: Nature As It Was, As It Is, As It Could Be*

Gail Anderson-Dargatz, *The Spawning Grounds*

Fred Stenson, *Who by Fire*

Liza Piper and Lisa Szabo-Jones, eds., *Sustaining the West: Cultural Responses to Canadian Environments*

ASSIGNMENT PORTFOLIO:

A glossary for the anthropocene (2 glossary entries, 500 – 750 words each): 15%

A research essay analyzing two of the primary course texts in relation to a central problem or question emerging from the course/course materials (2500 – 3000 words): 25%

A research-based personal essay (2000 - 2500 words): 40%
(25% for the essay and 15% for the ‘object’ produced)

Final exam (open-book, take-home exam): 20%

TOTAL 100%

Important Notes:

This course will be conducted as a mixture of lecture, class and small-group discussion, and other forms of learning. Respectful participation in all such activities, not just lectures, is compulsory. An important part of intellectual work is being able to speak about it with others. In short, students will be expected to assume the role of active participants in the co-construction and dissemination of knowledge rather than that of merely passive consumers of it. This includes participation in discussion and other credit-free assignments and activities carried out during class time.

The final examination will be a take-home open-book examination. That in no way suggests that regular, committed attendance of classes, taking notes and studying are not essential. The final exam will consist of questions pertaining to the literary texts, lectures, discussion and any and all classroom activities including short group assignments carried out in class, and punctuation, grammar, style, genre, etc. will all be taken into account. In other words, anything and everything we do in class or for which you are responsible outside of class (e.g., completing the reading of the texts) may be examination material.

Students are required to meet with the instructor with respect to their ideas and plans for their research-based personal essay no later than week 4 of the course, preferably as early as possible. Students will have most of the term in order to work on this assignment (the assignment will be presented weeks 10, 11, 12 and 13 depending on course enrolment) but early consultation is required in order to allow you to draw up a plan and get started ASAP. You may simply drop by during my office hour during weeks 1 to 4 or make an appointment in advance. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be handed out in class, but for present purposes here is an overview. You will be invited to create, make or do something relevant to living in the Anthropocene, to research, record and reflect on your process and experience. As James Howard Kunstler writes, in the Long Emergency (the Anthropocene) “Work for many may become a matter of making oneself useful to others in the immediate community, with the possible added benefit of earning a living by doing so” (274). I will provide lots of suggestions to get you started thinking about what you might want to do (and it is not my intention to suggest that intellectual work will be irrelevant in the Long

Emergency!) but I want us to explore 1) the relationship between intellectual and manual work and skills and 2) community in this assignment. I have allotted 25% for the essay as well as 15% for the item you produce (e.g., the bread and/or jam you learn to make, the music you compose, the board game or video you produce, the scarf you knit or crochet, the podcasts you make and disseminate, the non-toxic body care products you research and create, the series of interviews you conduct, etc.). You will be required to share your project with the class in the final weeks near the end of term as per a schedule, but I will not grade you on exactly how you choose to present it: of necessity I will give you guidelines as to time.

As per university regulations, students must be available for examinations up to and including the last day of the examination period (which is April 16 – 26).

ALL assignments for the course must be completed in order to be eligible for a passing grade for the course.

Please download from D2L and save to your own computer both 1) the course syllabus and 2) the class and reading schedule for easy reference throughout the term and so that you can access it even if the internet is not available for logging into D2L. Consult the class and reading schedule weekly so that you know what text(s) to bring to class each week and when assignments are due. Please bring to class the text(s) we are studying in any given week.

Only booklength works of fiction are called novels. Novels are works of the imagination. Works of nonfiction are not fiction: therefore they are not novels. You can call them nonfiction, literary nonfiction, creative nonfiction, or you can refer to them as books or texts. Genre is key to the reading and accurate comprehension of texts. The word “novel” is not synonymous with “book.”

All written assignments must be double-spaced in 12-point font with 1” margins on all four sides of the page. Times New Roman is the preferred default font for work in English literature, though you can use another easily readable font (Garamond, Cambria). (Note that “fun fonts” do not make your work appear serious or professional.)

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 assignments 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 and to facilitate timely completion both of assignments and of marking. Timely completion is made possible by starting your assignments well in advance of their respective due dates.

A class that meets only once a week for 2:45 minutes is the equivalent of three 50-minute or two 75-minute classes. In other words, if you skip just one of our classes, you will have missed the equivalent of a week’s classes. Therefore, a strong commitment to class attendance, completing the assigned readings in advance of the class for which they are scheduled, avidly participating in your own and others’ learning, demonstrating respectful, accountable and open intellectual engagement with the course materials and with fellow

students and the professor are among the most important components of learning. Think of a course as a community, a group of living, breathing, thinking, responding, feeling, knowledge-creating beings. A kind of think-tank, in effect. Intermittent attendance *always* results in losing one's place in terms of the material and the other people in the course and in turn in lower grades or eventual withdrawal.

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, computers, or other electronic or behavioural distractions in class. Surfing the web, checking email or social media, taking calls or texting during class is strictly forbidden!! Moreover, taking calls or texting by leaving the classroom is similarly not allowed. Such behaviour is far more disruptive and distracting to you, the people near you and the professor than you probably realize.

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 books for resale to other students who will underline and annotate and therefore probably 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. 'Make tracks' in your text (though not, of course, in any library books ever) and you will be far more likely to take ownership of the knowledge we will be co-creating in the classroom.

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 most phones. No, you cannot. We are not studying literary texts for an entire term simply in order to extract "the main idea" or "the general drift" of a text, as people sometimes imagine! Quite the opposite. We will be focussing on what is actually on the page. **For the same reason, you MUST bring the assigned reading(s) of the day to class. If you don't bring the text of the day to class, you are completely missing the point of close textual analysis.**

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

Double-sided printing of assignments is very 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. This is not only permissible but admirable. Just draw a line diagonally through material printed or written on the "wrong" side and make sure your pages are numbered and stapled in the correct order as you would for any assignment.

Please **DO NOT** use plastic cover sheets for your assignments. They have an annoying tendency to flap shut while one is trying to read and mark them, and using plastic contributes to waste, chemical pollution and the generation of even more carbon. Just a title

page and a simple staple in the upper left-hand corner of the page is perfect. Please staple or clamp your work before handing it in. Handing in unfastened work increases the chances of loss of your work and late penalties, and paper clips usually snag on and attach to other papers in a pile of papers and cause havoc.

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 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, discarded, 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 outside regular business hours via 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. But if you hand your work directly to me, you avoid all these complexities.

Feedback. For each of your assignments, I will give you feedback. It is expected that you address any deficiencies, errors or infelicities – or even if your writing is very good, you can always improve along the lines I highlight – prior to submitting your next assignment. To that end, I may ask you to submit both your new assignment and the previous (marked and graded) one so that I can note any improvements you have undertaken so please save your marked assignments.