

## *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

### *Syllabus*

## *Spotlight Theory: Ecocriticism the Anthropocene and Climate Change - 44733*

*Last update 13-03-2022*

*HU Credits:* 2

*Degree/Cycle:* 2nd degree (Master)

*Responsible Department:* English

*Academic year:* 0

*Semester:* 2nd Semester

*Teaching Languages:* English

*Campus:* Mt. Scopus

*Course/Module Coordinator:* Professor Louise Bethlehem

*Coordinator Email:* [louise.bethlehem@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:louise.bethlehem@mail.huji.ac.il)

*Coordinator Office Hours:* Tuesday 14:30-15:30

---

Teaching Staff:

Prof Louise Bethlehem

Course/Module description:

Ecocriticism is a field of literary studies that investigates the relationship between literature and the physical environment, including relations between human and non-human animals. Rachel Carson's foundational environmentalist text *Silent Spring* (1962) proved formative for some ecocritical scholars while others investigated Romantic literature and other configurations from the perspective of much older tropes or topoi, including the pastoral, the wilderness and the apocalypse. Today, it is widely acknowledged that human-induced or anthropogenic impacts on the earth and its biosystems such as greenhouse gas emissions are triggering unprecedented climate crisis. At the turn of the millennium, biologist Eugene Storer and chemist Paul Crutzen introduced the term "Anthropocene" (anthropo for "human;" cene for "new") to describe epochal change at a planetary level. This course uses works of climate fiction and speculative fiction to explore textual practices that are commensurate with such epochal change. How, it asks, do such texts draw on previous traditions of utopian and dystopian fiction?

Course/Module aims:

Through the lens of existing paradigms such as ecocriticism and postcolonial criticism as well as emergent ones such as the oceanic humanities, the course aims to familiarize students with literary methodologies adequate to the temporal disparities and disparities of scale that arise from the accelerating pace of planetary devastation.

It seeks to define key terms including Ecocriticism, Interdisciplinarity, Ecofeminism, Constructionism, Anthropocene, Oceanic Humanities, Hydrocolonialism, Posthumanism, New Materialism, among others.

The course seeks to examine how the interplay between history and natural history is reflected in literature.

Following recent scholarship by Ian Baucom, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Achille Mbembe and others, the course seeks to trace the implications of the unevenness of climate emergency for literatures of the global South.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

To define ecocritical paradigms and key terms.

---

*To analyze a novel, poem or short story using the theoretical toolboxes and lexicon of ecocriticism and the environmental humanities.*

*To write a blog of 1,000 words or to create a podcast explaining a key term studied in the course or introducing a novel keyword.*

*To reflect critically through a reading diary on our own consumption practices or other environmental impacts.*

Attendance requirements(%):

100

*Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Lecture and discussion as well as group work*

Course/Module Content:

*Topics to be investigated include:*

*Introducing Key Terms*

*The Pastoral*

*Dwelling versus Wilderness*

*Radical Home-Making and the Politics of Care*

*Flight, Migration and the Climate Refugee*

*Ecofeminism and Posthumanism*

*Assemblages and Actants*

*Ruination and Slow Violence*

*Extraction and Extractivism*

*The Anthrozoopolis*

*Hydrocolonialism and the Politics of Infrastructure*

*Salvage versus Salvation*

Required Reading:

*Primary Texts*

*Lauren Beukes (2010) \_Zoo City\_*

*Rachel Carson (1962)*

*\_Silent Spring\_*

*Barbara Kingsolver (2012) \_Flight Behavior\_*

*Filmography*

*Wanuri Kahiu (2009) \_Pumzi\_*

*William Kentridge (1991) \_Mine\_*

---

*A complete bibliography of secondary readings will be distributed during the first week of the semester.*

*Additional Reading Material:*

*A selection of contemporary poetry relevant to the course will be made available on Moodle.*

*Course/Module evaluation:*

*End of year written/oral examination 0 %*  
*Presentation 0 %*  
*Participation in Tutorials 5 %*  
*Project work 0 %*  
*Assignments 20 %*  
*Reports 0 %*  
*Research project 60 %*  
*Quizzes 0 %*  
*Other 15 %*  
*Forums*

*Additional information:*

*The mid-term assignment will involve working in pairs.*