COMPARATIVE LITERATURE 207  
Summer 2021

Why is Climate Change Un-believable? Interdisciplinary Approaches to Environmental Action

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The science is there. The evidence is there. Why do people still refuse to recognize one of the greatest threats to human existence? Why can’t, why won’t they believe the truth? The time to act is slowly evaporating before our eyes.

How can we translate knowledge into action?

To answer this question requires an interdisciplinary approach that investigates many of the ways global warming has been analyzed, imagined, represented, and evaluated. Thus we welcome students of any major willing to embark on this common project and to participate fully. We will challenge ourselves to move between and amongst texts that are familiar and those we will bring into the conversation. There will be much that we miss, but we hope this course will at least begin a serious conversation in a unique way.

The course will run on two parallel “tracks”—on the one hand, we will delve into textual representations and arguments; on the other hand, we will attempt to develop a sensibility for how climate change makes itself manifest in the physical world. The first track of this course will center on the discussion of two books: *Chernobyl Prayer* by Svetlana Alexievich, and *The Overstory* by Richard Powers. The second track of this course consists of a series of essays and multimedia exercises where you will critically explore how you register and perceive the environment.

**Mandatory Readings:**

Please purchase the following books:


All other readings will be available in Canvas.
Format

Seminar Format, with a short 10-15 min introduction, group activities, followed by a discussion with the entire class, and closing comments from the instructor.

Assignments

- You will be required to post a short paragraph response (~250 words) to one of the readings every other week and share it in class.

- As part of a group, you will give a 12-15 minute presentation on a topic connected to climate change. You should incorporate artistic, visual, sonic, and/or other kinds of media to depict the issue, and walk us through how and why you chose that method to represent your ideas.

Grading

SCHEDULE

Week 1

Tu 6/22: Introductions, expectations, goals, responsibilities. Set up groups

Th 6/24:
Tversky and Kahneman, “The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice” (Canvas)
Rob Nixon, Slow Violence: The Environmentalism of the Poor (Introduction, Canvas)

Week 2

Tu 6/29:
Amitav Ghosh, The Great Derangement (“Stories,” pp. 3-84, Canvas)

Th 7/1:
Ben Ehrenreich, Desert Notebooks selection (Canvas). First blog due Monday 7/5

Week 3

Tu 7/6:
Chernobyl Prayer (pages 1-75).

Th 7/8
Chernobyl Prayer (pages 255-280).
Week 4

Tu 7/13
REVIEW—discuss projects

Th 7/15: Candace Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future* (Selections, Canvas) Second blog due Monday 7/19

Week 5

Tu 7/20: Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Selections, Canvas)

Th 7/22:
Powers, *The Overstory* (1-72)

Week 6

Tu 7/27:
*The Overstory* (72-161)

Th 7/29
*The Overstory* (162-245) Final blog due Monday 8/2

Week 7

Tu 8/3
*The Overstory* (245-330)

Th 8/5
*The Overstory* (331-end)

Week 8 (8/10, 8/12)

Tu and Th: Presentations