

LB 393 – SEMINAR IN ARTS, HUMANITIES, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
(Imagining Futures: Climate Fiction and Environmental Sociology in the Anthropocene)
Spring 2021; Section 001

12:30-1:45pm TR in C358 Clark Building

Co-Instructor: Leif Sorenson – Office Hours
2-3pm T; 3-4pm W(joint); and by appt. - (MS Teams)
e-mail: Leif.Sorensen@colostate.edu

Co-Instructor: Pat Mahoney – Office Hours
3-4pm M; 3-4pm W(joint); 2:30-3:30pm R - (MS Teams)
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“What if the faculty of storytelling were not specifically human but rather the last remnant of our animal selves? A vestige left over from a time before language, when we communicated as other living beings do? Why else is it that only in stories do animals speak? Not to speak of demons, and gods, and indeed God himself? It is only through stories that the universe can speak to us, and if we don’t learn to listen you may be sure that we will be punished for it”

Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*, pp. 141.

“There were people moving around the hill, sometimes silhouetting themselves against the sky as they ran or walked over the tops of hills. I saw groups and individuals. Twice I saw dogs, distant, but alarming. I heard a lot of gunfire. The last and the dogs worried me, scared me. A pistol would be no protection against a machine gun or automatic rifle. Would a pack keep coming if I shot two or three of its members? I sat in a cold sweat, longing for walls – or at least for another magazine or two for the gun”

Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, pp. 187.

“Missiles spat from the chopper’s tubes, arcs of fire, silent in the air and then explosively loud as they buried themselves in the guts of the Carver City’s water infrastructure. Flaming mushrooms boiled up into the night, bathing the desert orange... *It’s the end of times*, Angel thought as more missiles pummeled the water-treatment plant. *It’s the goddamn end of times*. And then on the heels of that thought, another followed, unbidden. *Guess that makes me the Devil*”

Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife*, pp. 19-20.

COURSE OVERVIEW¹

Welcome to this semester’s College of Liberal Arts interdisciplinary seminar *Imagining Futures: Climate fiction and Environmental Sociology in the Anthropocene*, we are excited to have you in the course and look forward to journeying together through these challenging times. Please bring your insights and understanding of our world to the course and share them with your fellow students. Whether it’s raging forest fires, destructive hurricanes, or rising oceans events taking place in the world today feel increasingly like something out of a science fiction novel. This course takes a creative approach to the study of climate change by combining the insights from the burgeoning genera of science fiction called climate fiction or “cli-fi” with an evidence-based assessment of human-driven ecological degradation documented by environmental sociology. In bringing together these two conversations we will grapple with the question: How do we overcome the impasse of climate change?

¹ We reserve the right to alter any information in this syllabus

The complexity of climate change mandates that no single disciplinary approach fully captures the magnitude of this world-historical crisis. This course brings the bigness of climate change into focus through in-class collaboration and critical discussions around issues related to environmental justice, inclusion, and diversity, as well as providing student's with the opportunity to reflect by means of speculative writing and essays. Additionally, we localize our discussion through a community-based project that evaluates the City of Fort Collins' "Climate Action Plan". At the heart of this interdisciplinary course is the co-creation of novel ways to understand the future that are grounded in present-day activity.

The seminar pivots around the reading of three climate fiction novels, each positioned along the continuum of time. Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), is a present-day look at the social, environmental, and species disruption associated with climate change. The work takes a global approach to issues such as climate refugees, and brings into focus the tensions between the Global North and Global South. Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) is a highly acclaimed consideration of near-future community decay and rising precarity as a result of climate change. The novel narrates a story of forced migration and the struggle for survival in a violent world that has been torn apart and collapsed under the relenting pressure of human-induced climate change. Given the despair of climate change, both these novels strike a hopeful tone, arguing that a new ecological awareness and set of social practices can emerge from this crisis. Lastly, Paolo Bacigalupi's *The Water Knife* (2015) is set in a future of extreme drought and stark social inequality. The story of the water knife is a story of how intimidation, wealth, and violence are used to control the most precious of resources – water. The novel highlights how the pervasive privatization of resources and profound struggles for existence are distinct possibilities if climate change goes unabated.

Our challenges today are great, but we look forward to working through these issues together this semester. Our hope is that a critical assessment of today, by speculating about tomorrow, will encourage us all to become agents of social change. Let's work together to make a better world for our descendants than the one we inherited.

Spring 2021 COVID-19 Protocol: LB 393: Imagining Futures: Climate fiction and Environmental Sociology in the Anthropocene is scheduled as face-to-face course (100% in-person). With all classes beginning online in week one (Phase 1, through January 22nd), we will be meeting virtually at our assigned time 12:30-1:45pm through MS Teams. In week two (Phase 2, beginning January 25th) the course will transition to in-person and will meet at the scheduled time and on the scheduled days in C358 Clark Building. All classes will move back to remote instruction after Spring Break which falls in the thirteenth week of the semester (April 10-18), and will remain so until the semester ends.

REQUIRED TEXT (alphabetical):

- Bacigalupi, Paolo. 2015. *The Water Knife*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Butler, Octavia. 1993. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.
- Ghosh, Amitav. 2019. *Gun Island*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.
- Additional readings available via Canvas

ONLINE & CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Classroom Etiquette:

The College of Liberal Arts is proud to be offering this unique and exciting interdisciplinary seminar. All of us in the college are uniquely equipped to study and explore the rich meanings, beliefs, and social practices that makeup the human experience. As we embark on this endeavor together, we ask you to be mindful of affording one another the respect and courtesy that we expect from others. Please take a moment to read and reflect on CSU's "Principles of Community" as the classroom is, or ought to be, considered a community within the larger CSU community.

- ✓ Integrity: We are accountable for our actions and will act ethically and honestly in all our interactions.
- ✓ Respect: We honor the inherent dignity of all people within an environment where we are committed to freedom of expression, critical discourse, and the advancement of knowledge.
- ✓ Service: We are responsible, individually and collectively, to give of our time, talents, and resources to promote the well-being of each other and the development of our local, regional, and global communities.
- ✓ Social Justice: We have the right to be treated and the responsibility to treat others with fairness and equity, the duty to challenge prejudice, and to uphold the laws, policies and procedures that promote justice in all respects.

A collaborative and vibrant community is the foundation for learning, critical inquiry, and discovery. Each of us has a responsibility to uphold these principles when engaging with one another not only in this classroom but as a member of the CSU community. For our part, please hold both of us accountable for promoting a learned, nurturing and inclusive environment, one that is welcoming of diverse arguments and beliefs. Together, we are all responsible to see that this occurs.

Challenging Hate:

Tell Someone is a confidential reporting line for anyone with concerns about safety or mental health issues. You can reach the *Tell Someone* phone line (970) 491-1350 or use the online referral form. Counseling services are provided for students through the Student Health Network: <https://health.colostate.edu/>; phone: 491-7121. Similarly, people with concerns about discrimination and harassment are encouraged to contact our Office of Equal Opportunity at (970) 491-5836, OEO@colostate.edu, for assistance.

Any student who may be the victim of sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking or retaliation is encouraged to report to CSU through one or more of the following resources: Emergency Response 91; Title IX Coordinator/Office of Support and Safety Assessment (970) 491-1350; or CSUPD (non-emergency) (970) 491-6425. Finally, if you are a special needs student, please let either one of us know how we can assist you.

COURSE EVALUATION

COVID-19 and Course Requirements:

Important information for students: All students are expected and required to report any COVID-19 symptoms to the university immediately, as well as exposures or positive tests from a non-CSU testing location. If you suspect you have symptoms, please fill out the COVID Reporter (<https://covid.colostate.edu/reporter/>). If you know or believe you have been exposed, including living

with someone known to be COVID positive, or are symptomatic, it is important for the health of yourself and others that you complete the online COVID Reporter. Do not ask your instructor to report for you. If you do not have internet access to fill out the online COVID-19 Reporter, please call (970) 491-4600. You will not be penalized in any way for reporting. If you report symptoms or a positive test, you will receive immediate instructions on what to do, and CSU's Public Health Office will be notified. Once notified, that office will contact you and most likely conduct contact tracing, initiate any necessary public health requirements and/or recommendations and notify you if you need to take any steps. For the latest information about the University's COVID resources and information, please visit the CSU COVID-19 site: <https://covid.colostate.edu/>. Most importantly, if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask, both of us are committed to making this a successful semester for us all!

If COVID-19 issues arise please communicate these to us ASAP. The student disability center is also assisting with accommodation if need be for COVID-19. Here is their website: <https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu/faqs/>, also more general information about COVID-19 at CSU can be found at: <https://covidrecovery.colostate.edu/>. Similarly, The Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT) has compiled a range of academic resources to facilitate success in this fall semester. Here is their website: <http://tilt.colostate.edu>.

This course adheres to CSU's Academic Integrity Policy of the General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code, which takes intellectual engagement and academic integrity seriously. At a minimum, academic integrity means that no one will represent another's work as their own. CSU defines plagiarism as "...the unauthorized or unacknowledged use of another person's academic or scholarly work... plagiarism is a theft of intellectual property..." In short, plagiarism is stealing and cheating and will not be tolerated in this course. As declared by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant it's time to *Sapere aude!* (Dare to Know for ourselves).

Course Requirements:

Collaborative Discussion Post: Central to the course will be your contribution to a continuous collaborative conversation that will run throughout the course as a Canvas Discussion Post. Our central question will be: ***On the question of climate change, what contribution can we in the Liberal Arts make to overcome the current impasse?*** Periodically, over the course of the semester, you will be asked to review what your classmates have said on this question and contribute your voice to the community discussion. Toward the end of the semester together we will edit and organize your thoughts, observations, and suggestions into a coherent narrative and present them to the College of Liberal Arts Dean's office for public viewing. Perhaps our collaborative document will be sent-off to a prestigious New York publishing house!

In-Class Learning Activities: Please make sure you read the material *prior* to class and bring your comments and questions to the seminar where we can "hash them out". To facilitate this, during the semester there will be a series of in-and-out of class learning activities designed to promote conversation and discussion about the course material. Your willingness to share and discuss your interpretations of the course material is how we all learn from one another. Similarly, in active dialogue and application of concepts & ideas from the readings, together we can reflect on this historical moment by asking critical questions about our social world. We look forward to our discussions and debates in the coming weeks.

Essays: An essay paper will be drafted on each of the first two climate fiction novels, *Gun Island* and *Parable of the Sower* respectively. Each essay will respond to a posed question (or questions) and consist of approximately 8-pages in length (double spaced). Papers will allow you to develop a conversation between your thoughts and the course texts, lectures, and reserve reading(s). Course tests are available through the bookstore, while additional course readings are in Canvas and indicated by the ***bold and italicized font*** in the Course Schedule below.

Research Project: As the course progresses you will be asked to organize into groups and work on a joint project. Your projects will be asked to give special attention to the City of Fort Collins’ “Climate Action Plan” and how it relates to Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Water Knife*, which we will cover in the second half of the semester. Your work will culminate with the electronic submission of your group paper on Wednesday, May 12th of finals week.

Seminar Participation:

Meaningful seminar attendance and active participation is a must! This requires that you read and substantively reflect on the week’s readings *prior* to class. Seminars are predicated on discussion which makes for a more dynamic and enjoyable educational experience. Relax and have some fun, in LB393 you are amongst friends. Absences and missed assignments must be accounted for by providing legitimate documentation. In this time of COVID-19, everyone is responsible to communicate ongoing health issues and concerns. Student’s involved “University-sanctioned activities” must inform me of these events prior to their scheduled date. Make-ups and absences will be handled case-by-case.

Technology Use:

While the pressure these days to be constantly connected is great, laptops and smartphone are allowed in this course *only* if they are being used to access course-related material or take notes. Please use your technology for coursework, and not to swipe through Facebook, Tumbler, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter or to shop and work on another class. As COVID-19 has taught us, our time together is precious let’s take advantage this new-found awareness.

Essay Dates, Percentage Breakdown & Grading Scheme for the Course

		CSU Course Grading Scheme			
Essay One due electronically Friday, February 19 th by 5pm = 15%	In-class Learning Activities = 20%	100- 96.7 = A+	90-86.7 = B+	80-76.7 = C+	> 60 = F
Essay Two due electronically Friday, March February 19 th by 5pm = 15%	Final Group Project, due Wednesday, May 12 th = 20%	96.7-93.3 = A	86.7-83.3 = B	76.7-70 = C	
Collaborative Discussion Posts (minimum of three) = 30%		93.3-90 = A-	83.3-80 = B-	70-60 = D	

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week One; Tuesday, January 19 & Thursday, January 21: Welcome!

Tuesday, January 19th: Welcome and Introductions

Thursday, January, 21st:

--- Crutzen, Paul and Eugene F. Stoerner. 2000. "The 'Anthropocene'." *Global Change Newsletter* Vol. 41: 17-18.

--- Ghosh, Amitav. 2019. "Stories" Pp. 1-27 in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

--- LeMenager, Stephanie. 2018. "Climate Change and the Struggle for Genre" Pp. 220-238 in *Anthropocene Reading: Literary History in Geologic Times*. Eds. Tobias Menely and Jesse Oak Taylor. Pennsylvania State University Press.

--- Lockie, Stewart. 2015. "Why environmental sociology?" *Environmental Sociology* Vol. 1(1): 1-3.

Week Two: Tuesday, January 26 & Thursday, January 28: Contextualizing Climate Change

--- Notes on the "Great Acceleration" (in-class lecture)

--- Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*, pages 3-85.

--- Lidskog, Rolf & Claire Waterton. 2016. "Anthropocene – a cautious welcome from environmental sociology?" *Environmental Sociology* Vol. 2(4): 395-406.

Week Three; Tuesday, February 2 & Thursday, February 4: As We Interact with Other Species

--- Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*, pages 87-162.

--- Tollefson, Jeff. 2019. "One million species face extinction" *Nature* Vol. 56(May 9, 2019): 171.

Week Four: Tuesday, February 9 & Thursday, February 11: The Anthropocene in Everyday Life

--- Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*, pages 165-244.

--- Tucker, Hazel & Eric Shelton. 2014. "Traveling Through the End Times: The Tourist as Apocalyptic Subject." *Tourism Analysis* Vol. 19: 645-654.

Week Five; Tuesday, February 16 & Thursday, February 18: Communing with the Nonhuman Other

--- Amitav Ghosh, *Gun Island*, pages 245-312.

--- Higgins-Desbiolles, Freya. 2020. "Socialising tourism for social and ecological justice after COVID-19" *Tourism Geographies* Vol. 22(3): 610-623.

--- IFRC. 2019. "The Cost of Doing Nothing: The Humanitarian Price of Climate Change and How it can be Avoided" *International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies*, Geneva, Switzerland.

*****Essay One due electronically, Friday, February 19th by 5pm*****

Week Six; Tuesday, February 23 & Thursday, February 25: Climate Dystopia

--- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Chapters 1-7.

--- IDMC. 2020. "Global Report on Internal Displacement" *Internal Displacement Monitoring Center*, Norwegian Refugee Council, Geneva, Switzerland.

Week Seven; Tuesday, March 2 & Thursday, March 4: Social Mobility and Survival

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Chapters 8-14.
- Faber, Daniel & Christina Schlegel. 2017. "Give Me Shelter from the Storm: Framing the Climate Refugee Crisis in the Context of Neoliberal Capitalism" *Capitalism Nature Socialism* Vol. 28(3): 1-17.

Week Eight; Tuesday, March 9 & Thursday, March 11: Sharing with Others

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Chapters 15-20.
- Stuart, Diana and Ryan Gunderson. 2020. "Human-animal relations in the capitalocene: environmental impacts and alternatives" *Environmental Sociology* Vol. 6(1): 68-81.

Week Nine; Tuesday, March 16 & Thursday, March 18: Earthseed, A New Beginning

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Chapters 21-25.
- Fox, Nick J. & Pam Alldred. 2020. "Sustainability, feminist posthumanism and the unusual capacities of (post)humans" *Environmental Sociology* Vol. 6(2): 121-131.

Week Ten; Tuesday, March 23 & Thursday, March 25: The World of the Water Knife

- Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife*, Chapters 1-10.
 - Subramanian, Meera. 2019. "Humans versus Earth" *Nature* Vol. 572(August 8, 2019): 168-171.
- ****Essay Two due electronically, Friday, March 26th by 5pm******

Week Eleven; Tuesday, March 30 & Thursday, April 1: Violence and Drought, Closer than You Think

- Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife*, Chapters 11-23.
- IPBES. 2019. "The Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Summary for Policymakers." *Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, UN Campus Bonn, Germany.

Week Twelve; Tuesday, April 6 & Thursday, April 8: Climate Driven Inequality

- Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife*, Chapters 24-35.

Week Thirteen; Tuesday, April 13 & Thursday, April 15: ****SPRING RECESS NO CLASS!!****

Week Fourteen; Tuesday, April 20 & Thursday, April 22: A Future Worth Drinking To?

- Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife*, Chapters 36-47.
- Collective evaluation of the Fort Collins "Climate Action Plan"

Week Fifteen; Tuesday, April 27 & Thursday, April 29: Making it Local

- Collective evaluation of the Fort Collins "Climate Action Plan" (continued)
- Lynch, Michael J. 2020. "Green Criminology and Environmental Crime: Criminology That Matters in the Age of Global Ecological Collapse." *Journal of White Collar and Corporate Crime* Vol. 1(1) 50-61.

Week Sixteen; Tuesday, May 4 & Thursday, May 6: Into the Future

--- Where are we going?

--- Bińczyk, Ewa. 2019. "The Most Unique Discussion of the 21st Century? The Debate on the Anthropocene Pictured in Seven Points." *The Anthropocene Review* Vol. 3(1-2):3-18.

*****Final Project paper due Wednesday, May 12th by 12 noon*****