

LIT 3400: The Literature of Sustainability & Resilience

Professor Terry Harpold

Fall 2019, Section 11BB

Time: Tu, pers. 5–6 (11:45 AM–1:40 PM), Th, per. 6 (12:50–1:40 PM)

Location: Turlington (TUR) 2333

office hours: Tu, 2–4 PM & by appt. (TUR 4105)

email: tharpold@ufl.edu

home page for Terry Harpold: <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/tharpold/>

e-Learning (Canvas) site for LIT 3400 (*registered students only*): <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

Imagining Climate Change: <http://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu>

Course Description

“Dystopia is for losers.” – Doug Henwood¹

This course takes as its founding premises two unassailable principles. First, we live in an time of increasing environmental instability, mass extinction, food insecurity, and social and economic unrest fostered by climate change. Second, the literary imagination is among our most powerful and adaptive responses to the planetary realities of the twenty-first century and a path forward to a more just, sustainable, and resilient future.

We will read widely from an established and emerging canon of literary nonfiction, fiction, poetry, criticism, and theory that address the perils and vitality of the late Anthropocene. Authors we will read include conservationists, naturalists, and ecologists such as Erle Ellis, Aldo Leopold, Ayelen Liberona, John Muir, Natasha Myers, Arne Næss, Roy Scranton, and Henry David Thoreau; fiction authors such as Chris Bachelder, J.G. Ballard, Jean Giono, Lauren Groff, Ursula K. Le Guin, Emmi Itäranta, Richard Powers, and Alexis Wright; poets and filmmakers such as Madhur Anand, John Ashbery, Margaret Atwood, Frédéric Back, Sandra Beasley, Robinson Jeffers, Wanuri Kahiu, and Ed Roberson.

Graded assignments include three short essays on assigned readings, a creative exercise in flash climate fiction, and a take-home final exam. Extra credit is available for students participating in [Imagining Climate Change](#)'s sponsored volunteer tree plantings in and

¹ From his foreword to Sasha Lilley, *et al.*, *Catastrophism: The Apocalyptic Politics of Collapse and Rebirth*. PM Press, 2012.

around Gainesville. The plantings are supervised by the Office of the Alachua County Arborist, Department of Parks and Conservation Lands.

This course qualifies as a [3-credit Humanities core course](#) for UF's [Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies](#).

Required Texts to Purchase or Download

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from online vendors. Used and electronic versions (Apple Books, Kindle, pdfs, etc.) are permissible – indeed they are encouraged² – so long as the version of the text you read is *otherwise identical to the editions noted below*. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy physical texts online, I recommend sources such as [Abebooks.com](#) and [Alibris.com](#) that serve independent booksellers.

Ballard, J.G. *The Drowned World*. Liveright, 2013. Originally published 1962. ISBN 9780871403629. 240 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Ellis, Erle C. *Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN 9780198792987. 208 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Giono, Jean. *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Illustrated by Michael McCurdy, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007. ISBN 9781933392813. 72 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Itäranta, Emmi. *Memory of Water*. Harper Voyager, 2014. ISBN 9780062326157. 272 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Powers, Richard. *The Overstory*. Norton, 2018. ISBN 9780393356687. 512 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Wright, Alexis. *The Swan Book*. Washington Square Press, 2018. ISBN 9781501124792. 320 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

These and other required and recommended readings for the course are available for free via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>) or at the URLs indicated below.

Anand, Madhur. "Somewhere, a Lake." *A New Index for Predicting Catastrophe*, McClelland & Stewart, 2015, pp. 30–31.

² See my "Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom," below.

- Ashbery, John. "Into the Dusk-Charged Air" (1985), *The Mooring of Starting Out: The First Five Books of Poetry*, Ecco Press, 1997.
- Atwood, Margaret, "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises," *Selected Poems, 1965–1975*, Houghton Mifflin, 1987, p. 56.
- Bachelder, Christopher H. "Eighth Wonder." *Loosed Upon the World: The Saga Anthology of Climate Fiction*, edited by John Joseph Adams, Saga Press, 2015, pp. 341–61.
- Back, Frédéric, dir. *The Man Who Planted Trees*, CBC / NFB / Société Radio Canada, 1987. Available at <https://archive.org/details/TheManWhoPlantedTrees>.
- Bastin, Jean-François, et al., "The Global Tree Restoration Potential." *Science* 365, 76–79 (2019). Available at <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6448/76>.
- Beasley, Sandra. "Unit of Measure." *Poetry*, vol. 194, no. 4, 2009, pp. 276–77.
- Groff, Lauren. "Eyewall." *Florida*, Riverhead Books, 2018, pp. 84–100.
- Jeffers, Robinson. "Carmel Point" (1938), *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*, edited by Tim Hunt, Stanford University Press, 2001, p. 676.
- Kahiu, Wanuri, dir. *Pumzi*. Awali Entertainment, 2010. Available at <https://vimeo.com/46891859>.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. "The New Atlantis." *The New Atlantis and Other Novellas of Science Fiction*, edited by Robert Silverberg, Hawthorne Books, 1975, pp. 57–85.
- Leopold, Aldo. "On a Monument to the Pigeon." *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 108–12.
- . "Thinking Like a Mountain." *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There*, Oxford University Press, 1949, pp. 129–33.
- Liberona, Ayelen, and Natasha Myers. "Becoming Sensor in Sentient Worlds." Available at <https://becomingsensor.com>.
- Muir, John. "Cedar Keys." *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1916, pp. 123–42. *Out of copyright: available at* <https://archive.org/details/thousandmilewal00muir/page/n11>.
- . "The American Forests." *Our National Parks*, new and enlarged ed., Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1909, pp. 331–65. *Out of copyright: available at* <https://archive.org/details/ournationalparks1909muir/page/n8>.

- Myers, Natasha. "How to Grow Livable Worlds: Ten Not-So-Easy Steps." *The World to Come: Art in the Age of the Anthropocene*, edited by Kerry Oliver-Smith, Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, 2018, pp. 52–64.
- Næss, Arne. "Deep Ecology for the Twenty-Second Century." *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writing by Arne Næss*, edited by Alan Drengson and Bill Devall, Counterpoint, 2008, pp. 301–13.
- Roberson, Ed. "To See the Earth Before the End of the World." *To See the Earth Before the End of the World*, Wesleyan University Press, 2010, p. 3.
- Scranton, Roy. "We're Doomed. Now What?" *We're Doomed. Now What?*, Soho Press, 2018, pp. 3–8.
- Taylor, Bron. "Deep Ecology." *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, edited by Bron Taylor, Continuum, 2005, pp. 456–60.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "The Pond in Winter" (1854), *Walden*, edited by Bill McKibben, Beacon Press, 2017, pp. 265–79.

Course Calendar

Deadlines or events outside of normal class meeting times are marked with an asterisk (). Readings marked as "Ares" are available on electronic reserve.*

Note that this version of the calendar includes changes following hurricane-related course cancellations.

We must unhumanize our views a little

Tu, Aug 20	<i>Course introduction</i> <i>Signature reading exercise described</i>
Th, Aug 21	Le Guin, "The New Atlantis" (Ares)
* M, Aug 26	<i>Signature reading exercise due</i>
Tu, Aug 27	Ellis, <i>Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction</i> Scranton, "We're Doomed. Now What?" (Ares)
Th, Aug 29	Beasley, "Unit of Measure" (Ares) Jeffers, "Carmel Point" (Ares)

Tu, Sept 3 ***Class cancelled due to Hurricane Dorian***

Th, Sept 5 Ballard, *The Drowned World*

Tu, Sept 10 Ballard, *The Drowned World*

The overstory

Th Sept 12 Myers, "How to Grow Livable Worlds: Ten Not-So-Easy-Steps" (Ares)
Myers and Liberona, "Becoming Sensor in Sentient Worlds"

Tu, Sept 17 Powers, *The Overstory*
Recommended reading: Muir, "The American Forests"

Th, Sept 19 Powers, *The Overstory*

Tu, Sept 24 Powers, *The Overstory*
In-class preview of flash climate fiction creative exercise

Th, Sept 26 *No class meeting (TH is away)*

Tu, Oct 1 Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees*
Back, *The Man Who Planted Trees*
Recommended reading: Bastin, et al., "The Global Tree Restoration Potential."

Entr'acte times

Th, Oct 3 Bachelder, "Eighth Wonder" (Ares)

Tu, Oct 8 Groff, "Eyewall" (Ares)

Th, Oct 10 Wright, *The Swan Book*

Tu, Oct 15 Wright, *The Swan Book*

Th, Oct 17 Wright, *The Swan Book*

* M, Oct. 21 *Flash climate fiction exercises must be posted to Canvas by 5 PM*

Tu, Oct 22 Guest lecture by Temiti Lehartel (Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier 3) on Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book*. The lecture is sponsored by [Imagining Climate Change](#). Note the location of lecture: Marston Library L-136.

Th, Oct 24 *In-class review of flash climate fiction creative exercise*

Tu, Oct 29 *In-class review of flash climate fiction creative exercise*

Somewhere a spring, a pond, a lake, a pond, a storm

Th, Oct 31 Thoreau, *Walden* (excerpt), "The Pond in Winter" (Ares)

Tu, Nov 5 Anand, "Somewhere, a Lake" (Ares)
Ashbery, "Into the Dusk-Charged Air" (Ares)

Th, Nov 7 Itäranta, *Memory of Water*

Tu, Nov 12 Itäranta, *Memory of Water*

Th, Nov 14 Kahiu, *Pumzi*

The transmundane furnace

Tu, Nov 19 Atwood, "Elegy for the Giant Tortoises" (Ares)
Leopold, "On a Monument to the Pigeon" (Ares)
Recommended reading: Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" (Ares)

Th, Nov 21 Roberson, "To See the Earth Before the End of the World" (Ares)

Tu, Nov 26 Arne Næss, "Deep Ecology for the Twenty-Second Century" (Ares)
Recommended reading: Taylor, "Deep Ecology"
Review of prompts for take-home final

Tu, Dec 3 Muir, "Cedar Keys"
Final class meeting – course debriefing

*** Wed, Dec. 11 Take-home final due by 11:59 PM**

Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by four assignments, each representing a portion of the grade:

Signature reading exercise:	3%
Short critical essays on assigned readings (× 3 @ 10%)	30%
Flash climate fiction creative exercise	17%
Take-home final exam	50%

Signature reading exercise. This is a short writing exercise that will help participants in the course understand your interests and habits; it's essentially a report on your recent reading for pleasure. (I will complete the exercise also.) This is a good way to start off our conversations this semester and to identify shared interests in the class. The exercise is due five days after the first class meeting. Students who register for the course nearer to the end of drop/add can make up this assignment during the second week of class. If you complete this exercise and meet its (very) basic requirements, you will receive a grade of 100 on the assignment. In effect, the assignment is worth three points toward your final grade. The procedure for the signature reading assignment will be reviewed in the first class meeting.

Short critical essays. During the semester you are required to complete three short critical essays on texts and films we have read/viewed and discussed in class, not including the flash climate fiction exercises we will review together. Each essay must be 3–4 double-spaced pages in length, not including a Works Cited section, and must demonstrate a close critical reading of a passage or passages from the text that you find of particular interest or significance. Essays must be submitted to me no later than one week after the last class meeting when the text is scheduled for discussion. Early in the semester I will distribute a model for the critical essays illustrating my expectations for them.

You are free to write these essays on any text or film among the assigned readings; you do not have to notify me in advance of which texts you are writing on. You must keep track of all deadlines related to this course requirement. (Remember, you must complete each essay within the week after the text was discussed, and a total of three essays by the end of the semester.) I will review, grade, and return the essays on a rolling basis throughout the semester.

Flash fiction creative exercise. This exercise is a practical application of a concept that is central to our readings and discussions this semester: the literary imagination can be

brought to bear on the conceptual and ethical challenges of environmental crisis in ways that scientific discourses of climate and sustainability studies cannot. Creative, imaginative writing must be in our collective cultural toolkit for representing and responding to a world in transition.

You will compose an original “flash fiction” – a text of 100 words or fewer – that represents aspects of a climate changed world: a piece of the puzzle, a fragment in the kaleidoscope, a problem, a solution, a snapshot of worlds to come or those already upon us. You will have complete control over the format and style of this text, whether it is narrative or non-narrative, description or conversation, etc. The only requirements are that it be original (your own work), no longer than 100 words, and that you have clearly made an effort to use the flash fiction format to engage with the emerging climate imaginary. This creative assignment is required; we will review every student’s flash fiction during two consecutive class meetings.

The grade for this exercise is calculated relative to the contributions to your final grade of your critical essays and final exam. If their average is 90 or below then your flash fiction exercise will receive a grade of 90. If their average is above 90, then your flash fiction will receive a grade equal to the average of your critical essays and final exam.

Take-home final exam. The last required writing assignment of the course is a cumulative end of semester exam. The exam will consist of short essay responses to detailed prompts reflecting on the texts we have read and asking you to apply the historical and critical methods of the course to them. The exam will consist of four prompts; you must respond to three of them. This is an open-book, take-home assignment. It will be posted to the course e-Learning (Canvas) site before Tuesday, November 26th class meeting and we will devote a period of that class meeting to review of the prompts. The completed exam is due by 11:59 PM, the first Wednesday after the end of classes.

Trees! (extra-credit option). Recent scientific research has shown that global efforts to plant additional tree cover on lands outside of existing forests and agricultural and urban lands have the potential to increase total forested lands by more than 25% and to cut the atmospheric carbon pool at tree maturity by about 25%. Global tree restoration is among the most effective climate change mitigation solutions available to us.³ You may earn extra credit in this course for participating in a local initiative to increase tree cover in our region.

The Office of the Alachua County Arborist, Department of Parks and Conservation Lands, supervises scheduled volunteer tree plantings in and around the city of Gainesville. The

³ Bastin, Jean-François, *et al.*, “The Global Tree Restoration Potential.”

plantings emphasize high-value tree species appropriate for site conditions on County owned right-of-ways, developed County properties, and properties directly influencing the public sphere. Of priority are trees that provide shade for bicycling and human pedestrians, provide erosion control, and support and contribute to wildlife biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Tree plantings are fun, low-effort undertakings to beautify our community and to help foster a sustainable local ecosystem for decades to come. Pretty much, you help to dig a hole a few feet deep, drop in a juvenile tree, refill, brace, bank the tree with mulch, water, and repeat. No prior tree planting experience is necessary. Appropriate tools and safety equipment, potable water, and vegan snacks are provided. Typically, a planting takes 3–4 hours, usually beginning around 9 AM. You must complete a volunteer release form before the planting begins. *The Office of the Alachua County Arborist is unaffiliated with the University of Florida.*

You will receive extra credit for participating in up to two sponsored plantings during the semester. For each planting, you will earn 2.5 points of extra credit applied *after* the calculation of your final grade. In other words, a student with a final average of 85 (a B+) who takes part in two plantings will have her or his grade raised to a 90 (an A).

If you are unable participate in the tree plantings, you may receive comparable extra credit for completing up to two additional short critical essays, as per the requirements described above. These essays are graded assignments: each is worth *up to* 2.5 points, less the difference between a grade of 100 and your actual grade on each essay. (Thus, two critical essays submitted for extra credit that earn grades of 84 are worth at total of 4.2 extra points.)

I will review the dates and locations of the tree plantings early in the semester.

Guest lecture by Temiti Lehartel. On October 22, [Imagining Climate Change](#) will sponsor a guest lecture by Temiti Lehartel (Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier 3, France), on Alexis Wright’s novel *The Swan Book*, one of assigned texts we are reading this semester. Lehartel is a rising scholar of Aboriginal South Pacific climate fiction. The lecture will be held during our usual Tuesday class meeting times but at a different location.

Grading scheme and graded assignments. The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF’s policies on grading (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89
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B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73	C–	67–69
D+	64–66	D	60–63	D–	57–59

A grade of 56 or below is a failing grade (E).

If you do not complete an assignment you will receive a grade of 0. If you feel that you've been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may make up a missed assignment only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in the submission of graded work.

Attendance & lateness. The texts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading or do not come to class prepared and on time. Class discussions will often include materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. **I take attendance. After three missed class meetings, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.** I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 20 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) and provide me with appropriate documentation.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances you must notify me of this

conflict in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

Use of computers and other electronic devices in class. You may use personal computers and other electronic devices in class for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to classroom activities will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit your individual use of all electronic devices in class. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and similar communication devices may not be used during class meetings and must be set to silent ring at the start of class.

Course evaluation. Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Policy on academic honesty. The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.
- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the

work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom. When possible I will distribute all course materials via paper-sparing digital media. I encourage you to purchase e-book editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers' hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county's excellent but criminally underfunded public libraries.) If you do elect to keep your books, share them with others after the course is over. And a final appeal to your common sense: bring food and/or beverages to the classroom only in reusable containers. Please, no food or beverages in single-use containers and no single-use, unrecyclable cutlery or straws.