



ENL 2930: Special Topics - "Climate Fiction"

Professor Terry Harpold

Spring 2016, Section 17A7

Time: Tuesday, per. 7 (1:55-2:45 PM); Thursday, periods 7-8 (1:55-3:50 PM)

Location: Rinker Hall (RNK) 225

office hours: Th, 4-6 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 ENL 2930 (*registered students only*): <http://elearning.ufl.edu>

Course Description

"Modern science fiction is the only form of literature that consistently considers the nature of the changes that face us, the possible consequences, and the possible solutions." - Isaac Asimov

As we move into an era of increased climate instability, scientific analysis of climate change is becoming central to our understanding of the physical systems of our planet and the role of these systems in human life. Science fiction (sf), the distinctive literary form of our time, bridges elite and popular cultures and broadly engages enthusiasts and scholars alike in the work of imagining our possible futures. These areas of scientific, intellectual, artistic, and ethical inquiry - climate studies and sf - are converging in the new field of "climate fiction": text and graphic fiction grounded in the scientific realities of environmental change, and forecasting the resulting transformations of our societies, politics, and cultures. In this course we will read major works in this literary genre from the late 19th through the early 21st centuries, including scenarios of extreme global warming and cooling, widespread drought, and flooding due to unchecked sea-level rise.¹

This course coincides with an international colloquium at UF on "Imagining Climate Change: Science and Fiction in Dialogue" (February 17-18, 2016). The instructor (Harpold) is one of the organizers of the colloquium, which is co-sponsored by The France-Florida Research Institute, The Center for African Studies, The Center for the

¹ Global cooling scenarios are no longer scientifically credible; global warming has postponed them indefinitely. But the works themselves, which played an important role in sf during the first half of the 20th century, remain compelling as examples of how extreme climate may function as a condition of imaginative literature.

Humanities and the Public Sphere, the Department of English, the Florida Climate Institute at the University of Florida, the Science Fiction Working Group, the UF Smathers Libraries, and the UF Water Institute. Colloquium events are made possible with the support of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States. See <http://iimagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu> for a complete schedule of events.

This course is a humanities (H) subject area course in UF's General Education Program and carries "Cluster A" credit toward UF's Bachelor of Arts in Sustainability Studies.

General Education Requirements & Learning Outcomes

This course is a humanities (H) subject area course in UF's General Education Program.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Our emphasis will be on the intersections and feedbacks between the sciences of climate change and the emerging fictional imaginary of climate change: how fiction authors have applied our understanding of climate in the late Anthropocene (the geologic era dominated by humans) to predict human society, politics, and culture in the near- and long-term future.

Science fiction, as Isaac Asimov's observation (above) suggests, is an important venue for identifying challenges that face us in a more unstable world, and for imagining solutions that preserve biodiversity, human dignity, and ethical agency. Though "climate fiction" is a new label, science fiction shaped by a consideration of climate change is at least a century old. Our approach will be rigorously historical, addressing very old and recent fiction as we look for continuities and discontinuities that indicate how imaginative responses to climate have changed and continue to change. A key outcome of this course will be the connections that we make between methods of humanistic inquiry and effects of physical phenomena that are widely - and mistakenly - assumed to be measurable only by laboratory and field sciences.

At the end of this course, you will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes, as defined by UF's General Education Student Learning Outcomes:

Content. *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the subject area.* You will acquire a knowledge of modern science fiction (in print and graphic narrative) and of key

concepts and methods of the academic discipline of science fiction studies. Through cross-comparisons of historical and transnational examples of climate fiction, you will become familiar with a range of authors and subgenres reflecting the varied approaches of this sf genre. Your competence in these content areas will be assessed by regular short written observations on assigned readings and written responses to other students' observations ("seeded discussions"), and by comprehensive short essay midterm and final exams.

Critical thinking. *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the subject area.* Our discussions of climate fiction will draw heavily on established climate science - and the most assured predictions of the future that this science enables - and the historical and critical vocabulary of science fiction studies. You will learn to identify and analyze points of contact and departure between the physical sciences and imaginative literature, and how these fields operate in complex feedback with one another in contemporary scientific and popular discussions of climate change.

Communication. *Students clearly and effectively communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning in written or oral forms appropriate to the subject area.* The comprehensive midterm and final exams will assess your command of the nonfiction and fiction we have read together, and your ability to apply appropriate terminology and critical methods to print narratives, graphic narratives, and film. This is a reading-intensive course. The purpose of the seeded discussions and the exams is to give you opportunity to reflect on and to discuss with others the broad and specific traits of a significant corpus of an innovative and increasingly influential literary genre.

Required Texts

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from the usual online vendors. Used and electronic editions (iBook, Kindle, 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 your texts online, I recommend sources such as Abebooks.com and Alibris.com that serve independent booksellers.

Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Water Knife: A Novel*. New York: Knopf, 2015. ISBN 9780385352871. Print. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

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

- Ballard, J.G. *The Drought*. New York: Liveright, 2012. Orig. pub. 1962. ISBN 978087140401 5. Print. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*
- . *The Drowned World*. New York: Liveright, 2013. Orig. pub. 1962. ISBN 9780871403629. Print. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*
- Buckell, Tobias S. *Arctic Rising*. New York: Tor Books, 2012. ISBN 9780765358738. Print. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*
- Itäranta, Emmi. *Memory of Water. A Novel*. New York: Harper Voyager, 2014. ISBN 9780062326157. Print. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*
- Lob, Jacques and Jean-Marc Rochette. *Snowpiercer, Vol. 1 : The Escape*. Titan Comics, 2014. Orig. pub. 1982. ISBN 9781 782761334. Print (graphic novel).
- Legrand, Benjamin and Jean-Marc Rochette. *Snowpiercer, Vol. 2: The Explorers*. Titan Comics, 2014. Orig. pub. 1999 & 2000. ISBN 9781 782761365. Print (graphic novel).
- Oreskes, Naomi and Erik M. Conway. *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*. Columbia University Press, 2014. ISBN 9780231169547. Print. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*
- Smith, Stephanie A. *Other Nature*. New York: Tor Books, 1995. ISBN 9780312856380. Print. *Note: this book is out of print. Inexpensive, unused copies may be purchased directly from the author, a UF faculty member. I will announce how this may be done early in the semester.*
- Squarzoni, Philippe. *Climate Changed: A Personal Journey through the Science*. Trans. Ivanka Hahnenberger. New York: Abrams, 2014. Orig. pub. 2012. ISBN 9781419712555. Print (graphic nonfiction text). *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*
- VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation: A Novel*. New York: Larrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2014. ISBN 9780374104092. *Also available in iBook and Kindle editions.*

Other required and recommended readings for the course will be made available in electronic formats via the WWW or via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>)

Course Calendar

Note: Readings marked "Ares" will be made available via the Canvas's "Course Reserves" portal to UF's Smathers Libraries.

Climate Changed

- Tu, Jan 5 *Course introduction*
Signature reading assignment description
- Th, Jan 7 *Signature reading assignment due (ungraded but required)*
Andrew Butler, "Futurology" (2014, Ares)
Jean-Marc Ligny, "Exodus" (2014 - download from Canvas's "Files" tab)
- Tu, Jan 12 *The Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet XI, lines 1-203 (Ares)*
- Th, Jan 14 Squarzoni, *Climate Changed* (2012)
- Tu, Jan 19 Squarzoni, *Climate Changed* (2012)
- Th, Jan 21 Oreskes & Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (2014)

The Drowned World

- Tu, Jan 26 ***"Past and Future Sea-level Rise" - Guest lecture by Professor Andrea Dutton (UF Dept, of Geological Sciences)***
Assigned readings: Dutton, et al., "Sea-level Rise Due to Polar Ice-Sheet Mass Loss During Past Warm Periods" (2015, Ares); Mitchum, "Sea Level Changes in the Southeastern United States: Past, Present, and Future" (2011, Ares)
- Th, Jan 28 Ballard, *The Drowned World* (1962)
- Tu, Feb 2 Ballard, *The Drowned World* (1962)
- Th, Feb 4 Buckell, *Arctic Rising* (2012)

Tu, Feb 9 Buckell, *Arctic Rising* (2012)
Midterm exam posted at end of class meeting

The Burning World

Th, Feb 11 Ballard, *The Drought* (1964)

Tu, Feb 16 Ballard, *The Drought* (1964)
Completed midterm exam due by 1:55 PM

Th, Feb 18 **"Imagining Climate Change: Science and Fiction in Dialogue"**
No class meeting - Students will attend UF colloquium - see
<http://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu> for schedule of events

Tu, Feb 23 Itäranta, *Memory of Water* (2014)

Th, Feb 25 Itäranta, *Memory of Water* (2014)

Tu & Th, Mar 1 & 4 **Spring Break (no class meeting)**

Tu, Mar 8 Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Water Knife* (2015)

Th, Mar 10 Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Water Knife* (2015)

Tu, Mar 15 Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Water Knife* (2015)

Th, Mar 17 **No class meeting (Flarpold is at a conference)**

The Big Freeze

Tu, Mar 22 WMAP Science Team (NASA), "What Is the Ultimate Fate of the
Universe?" (http://inap.gsfc.nasa.gov/universe/uni_fate.html)
Wells, *The Time Machine* (ch. 1 1,1 895, Ares)
Campbell, "Night" (1935, Ares)

Th, Mar 24 Clarke, "The Forgotten Enemy" (1949, Ares)
Leiber, Fritz. "A Pail of Air" (1951, Ares)

Tu, Mar 29	Lob, Rochette, and Legrand, <i>Snowpiercer</i> , vols. 1 & 2 (1982, 1999, 2000)	(1982, 1999, 2000)
Th, Mar 31	Lob, Rochette, and Legrand, <i>Snowpiercer</i> , vols. 1 & 2 (1982, 1999, 2000)	(1982, 1999, 2000)

After the Anthropocene

Tu, Apr 5	Smith, <i>Other Nature</i> (1995) - <i>In-class discussion with UF Professor of English</i>	<i>the author, a</i>
Th, Apr 7	Smith, <i>Other Nature</i> (1995)	
Tu, Apr 12	VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> (2014)	
Th, Apr 14	VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> (2014)	
Tu, Apr 19	Rosný, a/né, "The Death of the Earth" (<i>Ares</i> , 1910) <i>Final exam posted at end of class meeting</i>	
Th, Apr 21	<i>Reading days (no class meeting)</i>	
Tu, Apr 26	<i>Final exam due by 1:55 PM</i>	

Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by the average of four kinds of assignments:

- Initiator of seeded discussions: 20% of final grade
- Respondent to seeded discussions: 15% of final grade
- Midterm exam: 25% of final grade
- Final exam: 40% of final grade

Seeded discussions. From the beginning of the third week of the course (January 19), most of our in-class conversations will be "seeded" by short observations (min. 150 words each) on assigned readings posted in advance to Canvas by one or more students, and by responses to those observations (min. 100 words each) posted in advance by other

students. The aims of these recurring assignments are to jump-start each day's discussion, to give each student an opportunity to orient our face-to-face and online exchanges, and to extend our conversations about the readings outside the confines of the classroom.

The number of seeded discussions and the number of initiators and respondents for each seeded discussion will vary according to the number of registered students in the course and the availability of students to participate on a given day.³ About one third of the students will be required to participate in this way in each day's seeded discussion. Thus, you should expect to be an initiator or a respondent about twice every three weeks, or every six class meetings.

Here's how the process works. For a given class meeting, several students are assigned to initiate a seeded discussion; several **other** students are assigned to respond to one of the seeded discussions. (Usually two respondents are assigned to each seed. They are required to respond to only that seed and not to others that may be posted for the same class meeting.) The initiators must post their seeds to Canvas at least 48 hours before the class meeting. The respondents must post their responses to Canvas at least 24 hours before the class meeting. (Note that the seeds **must** be posted before the responses are due. If you are an initiator, it is imperative that you are not late in posting your seed. Barring exceptional circumstances, a late seed or a late response will incur a grade of 0 for that assignment.) Posting the seeds and the responses **before** the class discussion of the assigned reading gives everyone in the course ample time to review the seeds and responses, and to contribute to the threaded discussion if they wish.

Participation in seeded discussions is open to everyone in the class; anyone may add to the emerging thread at any time. (All students should review each day's seeded discussion before coming to class.) Only those who have been **assigned** to initiate or respond will be graded on this participation. Your grade for participation in this process will be based three criteria: did you post the seed on time, did it meet the minimum length (min. 150 words for a seed, min. 100 words for a response⁴), and did it show critical insight into the reading, or raise an interesting question, and/or constructively advance our conversations about the readings?

Seeds may be about any aspect of the assigned text or its relation to other texts we have read or discussed. They may be focused tightly on a passage of the text or make more general observations about aspects of the text as a whole. You have considerable leeway here; the key thing is to find something you think would be interesting to talk about, and

³ Class meetings involving guest speakers (January 26, April 7) will have no seeded discussions.

⁴ These word counts do not include any passages you may cite from a text. Only your own, original writing will be applied toward the minimal word count.

that you believe will engage the interest of others in the course. Responses are more narrowly defined: your response should *directly* engage the initiator's observation or question - agree, disagree, affirm or dispute; your role is to start a conversation going that is motivated by what you find most interesting in the seed. With luck, others in the class will follow, and the thread will develop along a productive path even before we meet in class to discuss the assigned reading.

Your assignment as an initiator of or respondent to a seeded discussion will be made randomly. In no case will you be required to be an initiator more than once in a week, nor a respondent more than twice in a week, nor an initiator and respondent on the same day. In the second week of class I will ask all students to notify me of two class meeting dates during the semester when they *cannot* serve as an initiator and two class meeting dates when they *cannot* serve as a respondent. I will take these dates into account when I make the random assignments of seeds and responses.

The midterm & final exams. These exams will be open-book and cumulative to the dates on which they are given. Each will consist of short essay responses to detailed prompts that require you to reflect on texts we have read and to apply historical and critical methods of the course to them. Each exam will consist of three prompts, from which you must respond to two.

The midterm and final exams are take-home exams. In each case, the exam prompts will be posted on the course e-Learning (Canvas) site at the end of a class meeting and your completed exam must be uploaded to the site no later than the beginning of the class meeting one week later.

There are no other graded assignments in this course. There are no extra-credit assignments.

Course reading load. This course includes a substantial reading load but not an onerous one. During most weeks you will have to read no more than 200 pages of text, usually fewer. Two of the longer assigned works are graphic novels. Most of our discussions of novels are scheduled over a Th-Tu sequence, giving you a couple of additional days to keep on top of the readings. The seeded discussions and the midterm and final exams are designed to assess your comprehension of the readings and your ability to think about broad literary and philosophical problems raised by the genre of climate fiction; think of the course as chiefly an introduction to the genre not a comprehensive, detail-driven investigation of its . 'envelope' genres. Your ability to write clearly and cogently on the assignments will of course matter in the grades you receive on them, but the course does not require outside research or extensive writing. If you read the texts we'll discuss and

pay attention during and contribute to the class meetings and the seeded discussions, you should do well.

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		
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). A minimum final grade of C is required for General Education Credit.

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 exam 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 submission of graded work. Missed quizzes can only be made up only in extraordinary circumstances and will require special permission from the instructor.

Attendance & lateness. The texts and concepts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading assignments and come to class prepared and on time. Moreover, course lectures will often include discussion of materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. After **four missed class periods**, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.⁵ 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

⁵ Our course meets on a TuTTh schedule: one class period on Tu, two class periods on Th. If you miss a Thursday meeting it counts as much as two missed Tuesday meetings.

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 15 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 (352-392-8565, <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) by providing 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 well 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 feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be notified of specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/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 clearly spelled out in the UF Student FHonor 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. This may include a reduced or failing grade for the course as a whole 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. To the degree possible, I will distribute all course materials via electronic media; enough trees have been sacrificed to University paperwork. I encourage you to purchase electronic 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 fine 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 durable, reusable containers. Please, no bottled water or beverages in disposable containers.