

COLT 70.05 – Winter 2025

Class time: **(10) M-W-F 10:10am-11:15am, x-hour Th 12:15pm-1:05pm**

Class location: **TBA**

Office hours: **M-W, 2:00pm-3:00pm, by appointment** (in person or via Zoom)

Office: **309 Dartmouth Hall**

**Environmental Imagination:  
Ecological Narratives for the Anthropocene**

**1. Course description.** How do literature and the visual arts represent natural environments, and what can they teach us about the complex relationships between humanity and nature? In this class, we will engage with the Environmental Humanities, an interdisciplinary field that aims to challenge the conventional separation between the cultural and natural domains and foster a dialogue with other fields of study that question human-centered and Western-centric viewpoints. The class will be organized as a student-led seminar integrated with brief lectures. Each week will be dedicated to the exploration of a key term, such as “energy”, “time”, and “communication.” This will guide us in a critical analysis of poetry, short stories, feature and documentary films, photography, and paintings that engage with topics including environmental justice, climate change, eco-feminism, and plant and animal extinction. Therefore, by the end of the term, we will have compiled a “lexicon” that will help us challenge our preconceived ideas of nature and force us to expand our environmental imagination.

**2. Course objectives**

- Develop tools to critically analyze a variety of canonical texts in the field of the Environmental Humanities.
- Learn about critical approaches to the interpretation of the human-nature dichotomy, including animal studies, posthumanism, material ecocriticism, and plant studies.
- Critically examine scholarship from academic journals, books, and journalistic outlets and implement these texts in writing assignments and oral presentations.
- Become an active and respectful member of a learning community. You will develop the ability to follow discussions, oral arguments, and presentations, noting main points or evidence and tracking threads through different comments. Further, You will be able to challenge and offer substantive replies to others' arguments, comments, and questions, while remaining sensitive to the original speaker and the classroom audience.

**3. Course format.** Unless otherwise noted, the course will take the following format:

- Monday: brief lecture followed by a student-led seminar focusing on the analysis of a theoretical texts.
- Wednesday: student-led seminar focusing on the critical reading of primary text (poem, short story, film, etc.) through the lens of Monday's theoretical texts.

- Friday: student-led seminar focusing on the critical reading of a primary text (poem, short story, film, etc.) through the lens of Monday's theoretical texts.

**4. Class material.** Handouts and reading materials will be available for download on Canvas. The films we will watch and discuss will be available in streaming on Canvas "Panopto Video". You are expected to complete the readings and watch the films by the date listed on the syllabus and come to class prepared to actively participate in the discussion of these texts.

## 5. Coursework and Grading

**5.1 Class participation (10%).** Given the seminar structure of this course, participation is imperative to your individual success and the overall success of this class. Participation will be assessed based on your preparation for class, your contribution to a cooperative classroom atmosphere, and the quality and quantity of your active participation in class discussions and other group activities. Active participation means facilitating intellectual exchange, asking thoughtful questions, sharing ideas, and offering meaningful and respectful critique. Consistent active participation will earn an A (100); satisfactory but inconsistent active participation will earn a B (85); sporadic active participation will earn a C (74); inadequate class participation will earn a D (64).

**5.2 Lexicon: critical reflection on a key term (10%).** After completing the readings and before coming to class, you will share your analysis and questions on the Canvas discussion board "Lexicon", focusing on a specific key term. Open your analysis by identifying a key term (e.g. "extinction"), define the term, and explain why it is a key term in the assigned texts for that day. Conclude your entry by asking at least one question that will stimulate class discussion. This assignment may take the form of a short text entry (between 300 and 500 words), a brief video (3-4 minutes), or a slide presentation (4-5 slides), and should take minimum one hour to complete. Detailed and thought-out entries will earn an A (100); entries that only partially engage with the texts will earn a B (85); superficial entries will earn a C (74). Late submissions will be graded according to the "missed graded work" policy (See Section 6.3).

**5.3 Discussion leading (10%).** You will be responsible for leading one class discussion (on a Wednesdays or a Friday). You are expected to have developed a thorough understanding of the text(s) assigned for that class, facilitate engaging discussions, encourage participation from all students, provide insightful viewpoints, and ensure that the discussion stays focused and productive. The quality of the student's class discussion leadership will be assessed based on the following criteria: engagement (the student actively involves classmates and maintains a participatory environment), knowledge of subject (the student demonstrates a deep understanding of the texts and topics being discussed), facilitation skills (the student effectively manages the flow of discussion, encourages diverse perspectives, and keeps the conversation on track), and critical thinking (the student demonstrates critical thinking skills by analyzing and synthesizing information presented during the discussion). A self-assessment component will also be integrated.

**5.4 Midterm (30%) and final exam (40%).** These two take-home exams will consist of short essay questions in which you will be asked to critically analyze primary texts and effectively integrate secondary sources. The evaluation of these exams will be based on originality and depth of critical

analysis. Late submissions will be graded according to the “missed graded work” policy (See Section 6.3).

**5.5 Grading Scale.** A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 84-86; B- 80-83; C+ 77-79; C 74-76; C- 70-73; D 67-60; E lower than 60.

## 6. Course policies

**6.1 Canvas.** Be sure to consult the course Canvas site daily for complete information on assignments and coursework. You are responsible for all course information posted on Canvas.

**6.2 Attendance Policy.** Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. Every unexcused absence after two will lower your Final Grade by 2 points. Three tardies are equal to one full absence.

**6.3 Missed graded work.** On any assignment, your grade will be reduced by 5 percentage points for each day (24 hours) late (e.g., 24 hours late a grade of 100 would be reduced to a 95; after 48 hours, to a 90; and so on). Assignments that are more than 7 days late will receive a 0. Given that assignments are posted far in advance, no exceptions to the late policy will be made, including for planned and unplanned absences.

**6.4 Availability.** Please take advantage of my weekly office hours and let me know if you have any scheduling conflicts. You can always make an appointment to see me at another time and/or meet virtually via Zoom.

**6.5 Accommodations.** Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Apply for Services webpage](#); [student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu](mailto:student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu); 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

**6.6 Mental Health.** The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including: your Undergraduate Dean (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/>); Counseling and Human Development (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/>); and the Student Wellness Center (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/>).

**6.7 Religious Observances and Days of Cultural Significance.** Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students’ religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. Also, other days throughout the term may be of cultural significance to students, such as Indigenous People’s Day. If you have a religious observance or a cultural celebration that conflicts with your participation in the course, please

meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

**6.8 Preferred gender pronoun.** I strive to create a respectful and inclusive class environment. Please contact me if you have a preferred name and/or preferred pronoun by which you would like to be addressed.

**6.9 Dartmouth Honor Principle and Plagiarism.** Anything you will write for this class should be written by you. It is important that the crafting of any texts for this class is your work and not the work of others, either human or AI. All writing in which you engage with sources must comply with proper source citation; please ask if you are unsure whether you have cited correctly. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty of any kind will result in a failing grade in the course and disciplinary action. Please review the Dartmouth Honor Principle in the Students Handbook here: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/student-handbook/>. For your information, an online version of Sources and Citation at Dartmouth College is available at <http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth>. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and/or unauthorized collaboration, please contact me before submitting your assignment.

**7. Tentative course calendar.** This calendar may change to accommodate our needs and interests. Please check Canvas often and at least every Friday for that following week updated schedule.

#### **Week 1: Human**

- **Monday.** Presentation of the course and discussion of students' expectations. General discussion on "What are the Environmental Humanities?" and "What is 'human' and what is 'nature'?"
- **Wednesday.** Theoretical text: Burke, "What it means to be human" (book, selected parts)
- **Friday.** Primary text: Garland, "Ex machina" (film)

#### **Week 2: Nature**

- **Monday.** Theoretical texts: Morton, "Ecology without nature" (book, selected parts)
- **Wednesday.** Primary text: Thoreau, "Walden"; Leopold, "Thinking like a mountain"; Kimmerer, "Braiding sweetgrass" (books, selected parts)
- **Friday.** Primary text: Weir, "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (film)

#### **Week 3: Animal**

- **Monday.** MLK Day. No class held.
- **Wednesday.** Theoretical texts: Heidegger, "Fundamental concepts of metaphysics"; Wolf, "Zoontologies"; Calarco, "Zoographies"; Horkheimer, "Dawn & decline" (books, selected parts)
- **Thursday** (x-hour). Primary text: Alighieri, "Inferno I"; Blake, "The tiger" and "Auguries of Innocence"; Poe, "The raven"; Baudelaire, "The albatross"; Seward, "Old cat's dying soliloquy"; Carroll, "The Jabberwocky"; Neruda, "Horses"; Ferrari, "Slaughterhouse"; Henryson, "The paddock and the mouse"; Clare, "The badger"; Suit, "The Grasshopper" (poems)
- **Friday.** Primary text: Coetzee, "The glass abattoir" (short story)

**Week 4: Plant**

- **Monday.** Theoretical text: Lawrence, "Listening to plants. Conversations between critical plant studies and vegetal geography" (short essay)
- **Wednesday.** Primary text: Marder, "What is plant-thinking?" (short essay)
- **Friday.** Primary text: Gagliano, "Thus spoke the plant" (book chapter)

**Week 5: Matter**

- **Monday.** Theoretical text: Bennett, "Vibrant Matter (book, selected parts)
- **Wednesday.** Primary text: Levi, "Carbon" (short story)
- **Friday.** Primary text: Herzog, "Into the Inferno" (documentary)

**Week 6: Sound**

- **Monday.** Theoretical text: Pijanowski et al., "Soundscape ecology" (article)  
\*Midterm exam due by Tuesday at 6:00pm
- **Wednesday.** Primary text: Krause, "The great animal orchestra" (book chapter)
- **Friday.** Primary text: Carson, "Silent Spring" (book, selected parts)

**Week 7: Time**

- **Monday.** Theoretical text: Heringman, "Deep Time" (book chapter)
- **Wednesday.** Primary text: McGuire, "Here" (graphic novel)
- **Friday:** Primary text: Oristaglio, "Deep Time. A conversation with artist and naturalist Rachel Sussman" (interview)

**Week 8: Crisis**

- **Monday:** Theoretical text: Latour, "We have never been modern" (selected parts)
- **Wednesday:** Primary text: Todd, "An indigenous feminist's take on the ontological turn: 'ontology' is just another word for colonialism" (article)
- **Friday:** Primary text: selected artworks at the Hood Museum

**Week 9: End**

- **Monday:** Theoretical text: Lyotard, "Postmodern fables" (book chapter)
- **Wednesday:** Primary text: Ballard, "Deep end" and "The garden of time" (short stories)
- **Friday:** Primary text: Atwood, "It's not climate change. It's everything change" (article)

\* Final exam due by Wednesday, March 12th at 6:00pm