**Culture and Climate Change**

**ASCI 1138 (Autumn 2016), 1 Semester Hour Credit**

**Professor Thomas S. Davis (davis.3186@osu.edu)**

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 2-4, or by appointment, Denney Hall 462

**Email Hours:** Monday-Friday: 9 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

**Mailbox:** Denney Hall 421



**Course Description**

Climate change has emerged as one of the most urgent and complex dilemmas of the 21st century. Despite the incredible amount of data accumulated by scientists, thinking about climate change and telling its story has proven enormously difficult. For those reasons, many scientists have emphasized the importance of culture for understanding the changing relationship between human life and the environment. This class will examine a wide range of cultural forms and practices, including fiction, documentary film, ethnography, graphic narratives, digital artworks, and visual art. These works will invite all of us to see climate change from multiple perspectives and geographical sites in order to understand its complexity and to see the interrelations between our activities and the lives of those in distant locales and near futures. We will take up two sets of questions: first, how has climate change shaped cultural forms, practices, and ideas at local, national, and global scales? How are the manifold effects of climate change experienced at the level of everyday life? Second, how do cultural forms disclose the human and ecological costs of climate change? Can they offer unique and useful ways to narrate and to conceptualize climate change? As we explore these questions, we will also take time to consider the increasing collaboration between the sciences and the humanities on environmental issues and try to initiate such collaboration and exchange among ourselves.

Authors and filmmakers to include: Margaret Atwood, Ben Okri, David Mitchell, Naomi Klein, Bill McKibben, Gaia Vince, Helen Simpson, Sophie Calle, and others.

**Required Texts**

Mark Martin & Bill McKibben (eds).: *I'm With the Bears: Short Stories from a Damaged Planet*

Steve Duin and Shannon Wheeler: *Oil and Water*

Gaia Vince *Adventures in the Anthropocene: A Journey to the Heart of the Planet We Made*

FILMS:

*This Changes Everything* (Available for rental or purchase via iTunes and Amazon)

*White Earth* (Available on Carmen)

All other materials are available on Carmen.

**Course Assignments**

**Grade Scale: S/U, upon completion of all assignments**

**Participation: 50%**

This is an intensive seminar that requires consistent participation from all members. I expect that you have read and thought carefully about all of the material. Each student will bring two questions or observations about the readings to every class.

**Image Projects: 20%**

Students will capture and curate a series of three images that document how climate change (Week 5) or fossil fuels (Week 10) appears in, or is tied to, their daily lives. The images will be accompanied by a two-page document that narrates the significance of the images and the rationale of the selection. The images and accompanying text will be submitted as a single project. Students will select one image and briefly explain it to the class. We will use these images as a basis for a class-wide discussion. Each student participates in *only one* roundtable. Sign up on Carmen.

**Roundtable Discussions 30%**

The final two weeks of the class invites students to write a short paper (3 pages) reflecting on some dimension of culture and climate change that we have explored during the semester. These short papers will be posted in advance and everyone is expected to read them prior to coming to class. Each student will have a few minutes to introduce their work before the class engages in discussion of the papers and the issues they explore. Sign up on Carmen.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance** is mandatory and will be taken at each class session. Students are allowed to miss 1 class without penalty. Further unexcused absences will result in a "U" for the final grade. The student remains responsible for any information or assignments given out during missed classes. Official documentation for an absence (doctor’s note, note from the counseling center, etc.) must be submitted electronically and approved by me.

**Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://studentlife.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf>).

**Resources**

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the **Office for Disability Services** will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

**Class Schedule**

***Week One: Introduction: Climate Change, Culture, and Daily Life***

- Bill McKibben "What the Warming World Needs Now is Art, Sweet Art" (http://grist.org/article/mckibben-imagine/)

**-** From *Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction*, "What is Climate Change?" (1-11)

***Week Two: Environmental Humanities, Science, and Climate Change***

- From *I'm With the Bears:* Margaret Atwood "Time Capsule Found on a Dead Planet" (191-194)

- From *BioScience* 62:9 (2012, )Sverker Sorlin "Environmental Humanities: Why Should Biologists Interested in the Environment Take the Humanities Seriously?" (788-789)

***Week Three: Documenting A Changing Planet* (I)**

-  *This Changes Everything* (to be viewed outside of class)

***Week Four: Documenting A Changing Planet (II)***

- From Gaia Vince *Adventures in the Anthropocene :A Journey to the Heart of the Planet We Made,* "Introduction" (1-14) and students individually select another chapter.

***Week Five: Climate Change and Everyday Life***

- ROUNDTABLE 1: Images from everyday climate change

***Week Six: Fossil Fuels and Global Cultures (I): Petroleum and Modern Life***

* Frederick Buell " A Short History of Oil Cultures; or, the Marriage of Catastrophe"
* Simone Lia "A Well Oiled Mind"

***Week Seven: Fossil Fuels and Global Cultures (II): Nigeria and the Magic of Oil***

- Ben Okri "Stars of the New Curfew"

***Week Eight: Fossil Fuels and Global Culture (III): North Dakota and the Racial and Gender Politics of American Energy***

* From *The New Yorks Times Magazine* "North Dakota Went Boom" (January 31, 2013)
* Jessica Christy "Through a Window" (Art Installation)
* *White Earth* (20 min film on Carmen)

***Week Nine: Fossil Fuels and Global Culture (IV): Oil Spills and the Gulf***

Steve Duin and Shannon Wheeler *Oil and Water*

***Week Ten: Oil, Culture, and Everyday Life***

- ROUNDTABLE 2: Artifacts from our culture of oil

***Week Eleven: Climate Futures (I): Disaster or Possibility?***

* From *Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction*, "Envisioning the Future" (165-178)
* *futurecoast.org* (Explore site and listen to a few "phone calls")
* *capefarewell.org* (Read the 2008 Disko Bay Expedition and explore site)

***Week Twelve: Climate Futures (II): Fiction as Conceptual Experiment***

- From *I'm With the Bears,* Helen Simpson "Diary of an Interesting Year" (101- 116)

- From *I'm With the Bears,* David Mitchell "The Siphoners" (129-142)

***Week Thirteen: Climate Futures (III): Thinking and Living on an Altered Planet***

**-** Roy Scranton *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*



***Week Fourteen: Seeing, Thinking, Acting:***

**-** ROUNDTABLE 3: Presentation & Discussion of Student Short Papers

***Week Fifteen: Seeing, Thinking, Acting:***

- ROUNDTABLE 4: Presentation & Discussion of Student Short Papers