Course Proposal for The Ohio State University First-Year Seminar Program

„Can Culture Save Nature"? - An Introduction to Environmental Humanities

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Course goals:
- Offer an introduction to a frontier area of scholarly pursuit: the Environmental Humanities
- Students learn to read, understand, and evaluate research in the field of Environmental Humanities
- Students gain insight into how faculty pursue scholarship in the discipline of Environmental Humanities
- Students learn to develop a small-scale research project in the field of Environmental Humanities

Course description:
New environmental policies, designed to help the ailing natural world, are developed and implemented around the world, from measures to protect bees to bans on plastic bags. Nonetheless, many contemporary environmental scientists find that even their most compelling and internationally recognized environmental data, whether the concern climate change or biodiversity loss, have not motivated citizens and politicians to act with the necessary urgency. With the support of such scientists, scholars of the arts and the humanities hope to can help to create this sense of urgency and motivation, by drawing attention to the human aspects of environmental challenges--e.g., to the lives affected by those challenges and to the changing relationship among all living beings, whether that be a person, a bee, or a coral reef. The growing field of Environmental Humanities explores centuries of stories, images, and ideas about the natural world in order to shed light on its future, and even includes action-oriented projects, like cultural or social interventions.

This first-year seminar will introduce students to the different facets of Environmental Humanities, by exploring an article on a different topic every week, and enabling the students to develop their own project, over the course of the semester. While Germany will be one focus of the course, it will not be in the foreground of this course, as Environmental Humanities are interdisciplinary by nature. Students' final projects can range from traditional short papers and presentations to creative work or field work (projects including research on human subjects require an IRB and will not be feasible in the framework of this course).

The course will be divided into five topics: 1. the imagination of nature (wilderness; the city); 2. social and political narratives (indigenous societies; green political parties); 3. presentation of environmental data to the senses (film and visualization); 4. the conceptualization of animals

and humans (species concepts; limits of the human body); 5. the technological imagination (environmental and digital humanities; geoengineering).

Readings:
- All readings will be made available on Canvas/Carmen.
- Most readings will be taken from: Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 452-462. (10 pages). (eBook, available through the Ohio State University Library)

Grade components:
participation: 20%
weekly reading questions: 30%
final project:
> • idea/abstract: 10%
> • project: 30%
> • project presentation: 10 %

Grading: A-E

Weekly Reading and Writing Assignments:
Students will read one article in Environmental Humanities per week and answer written questions to accompany the reading. This assignment will not exceed 90 minutes per week so that students will have 30 minutes per week to work on their projects.

Final Project:
In conversation with and subject to approval by the instructor, every student will develop a small-scale research project in the Environmental Humanities and present on this project at the end of the term. Projects can take the form of traditional papers or non-traditional or creative forms, like diaries, art works, short films, or field notes. Students will work on their projects for 30 minutes/week; in preparation for weeks 9 (project abstract due) and 15 (project presentation), the will devote two hours to their projects. - Written projects should not be longer than 4-5 pages (1000-1250 words).

Syllabus & Reading Assignments

Week 1: Introduction
Reading. Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino: „Introduction The Environmental Humanities and the Challenges of the Anthropocene" (2017) (16 pages)

Week 2: Green Life and Culture Today
Reading: students research green lifestyle and culture blogs, select one blog per student, and report on it in class. The purpose of this exercise is that students learn about how questions of the environment impact people´s lives; and how people are engagement with such questions. They will also get a sense of the wide range of environmental issues of interest to people, and may get a first idea about what topic interests them. Some students may also be motivated to create their own blog as a project assignment.

Week 3: Origins of Environmentalism: the Idea of Wilderness
Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness." *New York Times Magazine*. 144.50152 (1995). Print. (ca. 5 pages) https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/13/magazine/the-trouble-with-wilderness.html

Week 4: Biocities between Utopia and Dystopia
Christensen, Jon, and Ursula K. Heise. "Biocities: Urban Ecology and the Cultural Imagination." Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 452-462. (10 pages)

Week 5: Conservation and Indigenous Societies
Kyle, Powys Whyte: "Our Ancestor's Dystopia Now: Indigenous conservation and the Anthropocene." Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 206-215. (9 pages)

Week 6: Green Political Culture and Germany's Green Party
Davis, Belinda. "A Brief Cosmogony of the West German Green Party." *German Politics and Society*. 33.4 (2015). (13 pages)

Week 7: Making the Environment Palpable
von Mossner, Alexa Weik. "Touching the Senses: Environments and Technologies at the Movies." Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 337-345. (8 pages)

Week 8: Making Climate Visible
Houser, Heather. "Climate Visualizations: Making Data Experiential." Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 358-368. (1 pages).

Week 9: Project Development Day
Students submit their abstracts/ideas and present and discuss them in class

Week 10: Saving and Saying "Biodiversity"
Sandler, Ronald. "Techno-Conservation in the Anthropocene: What Does It Mean to Save a Species?" Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 72-81. (9 pages)

Week 11: Posthumanism or "Love Thy Microbes"
Sodikoff, Genese Marie. "Multispecies Epidemiology and the Viral Subject." Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 112-119. (7 pages)

Week 12: Environmental Humanities in the Digital Age
Sinclar, Stéfan, and Stephanie Posthumus. "Digital? Environmental: Humanities." Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 369-379. (10 pages)

Week 13: The Phantasies of Geoengineering
Szerszynski, Bronislaw. "Coloring Climate: Imagining a geoengineered world"
Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 82-90. (8 pages)

Week 14: Research and Action
Garrard, Greg. "Environmental Humanities: Notes Towards a Summary for Policymakers."
Heise, Ursula K, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2016. 462-472. (8 pages)

Week 15: Project Presentations
Presentation and discussion of students' projects

Projects are due on the last day of finals week.

Statement on 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/csc/.

Statement on Accessibility

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Mental Health Statement

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Statement on Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.eduor by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.edu

Diversity Statement
The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.