UGED 2859: Nature in Philosophy and Art

Course Code/Section: UGED 2859	Year: 2022-23 Term 2
Course Title: Nature in Philosophy and Art	
Time/Venue:	Course website: blackboard
Course Teacher: KEE Hayden	Email: hkee@cuhk.edu.hk Phone:
Office Location: FKH 430	Office Hours: TBA
Teaching Assistant/Tutor:	Email: Phone:
Office Location:	Office Hours:

Course overview:

Environmental issues are most often approached through the STEM disciplines and social sciences. However, the humanities have the potential to help us understand and transform how we view and relate to the natural world. This course explores environmental issues from an interdisciplinary perspective integrating philosophy and the arts.

The first part of the course addresses central issues in environmental philosophy and ethics. We will examine (a) the concepts of nature and environment; (b) the relationship between the human being and its environment, between culture and nature; and (c) the Anthropocene, the geological epoch in which human activity is the primary factor shaping environmental change. We then turn to environmental ethics, asking what moral responsibilities we have to non-human living beings and ecosystems. We conclude the first part of the course with a discussion of the aesthetic value of nature. In the second part of the course, we will examine the role of the arts (especially literature, visual art, and film) in shaping our relationship with the natural world and motivating climate action. We will apply concepts from environmental philosophy and humanities to develop a deeper appreciation and critical understanding of environmental artworks, with a focus on work from Hong Kong artists. Throughout the course, experiential learning activities will give students the chance to see how transforming our understanding and relationship with nature can improve our overall well-being.

This course bears on several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We will see how work in the humanities and arts can motivate climate action (SDG#13 Climate Action). By reimagining our relationship with the environment and the connections between nature and culture, we can envision more sustainable ways of life in a heavily urbanized space like Hong Kong (SDG#11 Sustainable Cities and Communities). And by transforming our attitude towards and relationship with nature, we enjoy the mental health benefits of a deepened appreciation of and connection with nature (SDG#3 Good Health and Well-Being).

Learning outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to
1. analyse the major arguments in current environmental philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics, and understand the strengths and weaknesses of each;
2. understand how the humanities and arts shape our intellectual, evaluative, and emotional relationship to the environment;
3. articulate and critically reflect upon one's own attitudes towards the environment;
4. apply theoretical concepts in environmental humanities to interpret works of literature, film, and visual art, and critically evaluate their relevance for contemporary environmental issues;
5. synthesize ideas from a range of humanities disciplines to develop a composite, interdisciplinary perspective on complex contemporary environmental issues.

<u>Learning Activities:</u>

In-class:
- Most weeks our two in-class hours will be spent on lecture, discussion, and occasionally small exercises.
- Circumstances permitting, we will also have a class outing during one of our class sessions.
- Students will have the option to present the findings of their independent learning project to the class.

Out-of-class:
- Reading: Roughly 2 hours per week.

Preparing assignments and exams: Roughly 2 hours per week.

<u>Weekly Course Schedule and reading assignment:</u>

Week/Date	Topic	Required readings/other requirements
1.	Introduction	IEH chapter 1, "Introduction to the Environmental Humanities: History and Theory"
2.	Intro to environmental philosophy	IEH chapter 7, "Environmental Philosophy: Thinking About Nature"
3.	The Anthropocene	IEH chapter 3, "The Anthropocene: A Superhero Species Comes of Age"
4.	Nature, environment, culture	EP chapter 7, "Nature, Wild and Restored"
5.	Environmental ethics I: Animals and organisms	EP chapter 1, "Animal Suffering, and Why it Matters"; EP chapter 2, "Beyond *Animal Liberation*"; EP chapter 3, "Biocentrism and Ecocentrism"
6.	Environmental ethics II: Ecosystems	EP chapter 4, "Questions of Value"; EP chapter 5, "How Should One Live?"
7.	Environmental aesthetics: Beauty in art and nature	EP chapter 6, "The Aesthetics of Nature"
8.	Environmental art I	*(Experiential Learning Activity: Nature Writing Workshop)*
9.	Environmental art II: Visual art	IEH chapter 9, "Environmental Art: Creativity, Activism, and Sustainability"; Selections from environmental visual arts
10.	Environmental art III: Literature	IEH chapter 10, "Ecological Literary Studies: Imagining Nature"; Selections from environmental literature
11.	Environmental art IV: Film	IEH chapter 12, "Environmental Film: Projecting Nature"; Viewing of selected environmental film
12.	TBA / Optional student presentations	
13.	TBA / Optional student presentations	

Required readings:

Hubbell, J. Andrew, and John C. Ryan. (2021) *Introduction to the Environmental Humanities*. Routledge. (**IEH**)

James, Simon. (2015) *Environmental Philosophy: An Introduction*. Polity. (**EP**)

Recommended readings

Attfield, Robin. (2019) *Environmental Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Bassham, Gregory. (2021) *Environmental Ethics: The Central Issues*. Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.

Brown, Andrew. (2014) *Art & Ecology Now*. Thames & Hudson.

Callicott, J. Baird, and James McRae, eds. (2014) *Environmental Philosophy in Asian Traditions of Thought*. SUNY Press.

Chang, Chia-ju, ed. (2019) *Chinese Environmental Humanities*. Palgrave.

Cheetham, Mark. (2019) *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature Since the '60s*. Penn State University Press.

Emmett, Robert S., and David E. Nye. (2017) *The Environmental Humanities: A Critical Introduction*. The MIT Press.

Finch, Robert and John Elder, eds. (1990) *Norton Book of Nature Writing*. Norton

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. (2015) *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.

Kusserow, Karl and Alan C. Braddock, eds. (2018) *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Art Museum.

Moore, Ellen E. (2017) *Landscape and the Environment in Hollywood Film: The Green Machine*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Murray, Robin L., and Joseph K. Heumann, eds. (2009) *Ecology and Popular Film: Cinema on the Edge*. SUNY Press.

Narine, Anil, ed. (2014) *Eco-Trauma Cinema*. Routledge.

Oppermann, Serpil, and Serenella Iovino, eds. (2016) *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Read, Rupert. (2017) *A Film-Philosophy of Ecology and Enlightenment*. Routledge.

Schmidtz, David, and Dan C. Shahar. (2018) *Environmental Ethics: What Really Matters, What Really Works*. 3rd edition. Oxford University Press.

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt, Nils Bubandt, Elaine Gan, and Heather Anne Swanson, eds. (2017) *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*. 3rd edition. Univ Of Minnesota Press.

Vogel, Steven. (2015) *Thinking like a Mall: Environmental Philosophy after the End of Nature*. The MIT Press.

Wu, Ming-Yi. (2014) *The Man with the Compound Eyes: A Novel*. Pantheon.

Yong, Ed, ed. (2021) *Best American Science and Nature Writing 2021*. Best American Paper.

Assessment scheme:		
Assessment component	Description	Weight (%)
Short answer take-home exam		30%
Project		30%
Homework/assignment		20%
Participation		20%

Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/ .

With each assignment, students are required to submit a signed declaration (attachment 1) that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via **VeriGuide**, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Feedback for evaluation
a. Course and teaching evaluation survey will be conducted in the second last week of the course. Students are reminded of their responsibility and right to give feedback to facilitate enhancement of the course.
b. Students are welcome to give feedbacks to the course teacher at any time in person or through emails.

Grade Descriptors:
http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Declaration for written assignment

I am/we are submitting the assignment for:

□ an individual project or
□ a group project on behalf of all members of the group. It is hereby confirmed that the submission is authorized by all members of the group, and all members of the group are required to sign this declaration.

I/We declare that the assignment here submitted is original except for source material explicitly acknowledged, the piece of work, or a part of the piece of work has not been submitted for more than one purpose (i.e. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration, and that the submitted soft copy with details listed in the <Submission Details> is identical to the hard copy(ies), if any, which has(have) been / is(are) going to be submitted. I/We also acknowledge that I am/we are aware of University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and of the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, as contained in the University website http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/. In the case of a group project, we are aware that each student is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions

should there be any plagiarized contents in the group project, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed directly or indirectly to the plagiarized contents.

It is also understood that assignments without a properly signed declaration by the student concerned and in the case of a group project, by all members of the group concerned, will not be graded by the teacher(s).

_____   _____
Signature(s)   Date

_____   _____
Name(s)   Student ID(s)

_____   _____
Course code   Course title