What does it mean for literature to engage with political and ethical concerns about the degradation of the environment? Ranging from literary and environmental classics to contemporary science fiction, this course will look at the way literature changes when it addresses unfolding environmental crisis. We'll ask whether and how the novel, a form adapted to narrating the story of individual lives, can be stretched to represent broad social formations, long-term ecological processes, and abstract political and philosophic positions. How can the “slow violence” of climate change take narrative shape given that it is a process unfolding over centuries? How can writers approach a topic as vast as the Anthropocene—the great sixth age of mass extinctions in which human industry has become a force on par to catastrophic geologic events? How can the myriad and far-flung relationships of global capitalism be instantiated in fictional form? Can non-human species be given voice in language or image? What can science writing borrow from literary art to make technical debates accessible and compelling to a wide audience? Is there a way to write about environmental crisis that also preserves space for human agency—and therefore hope? We’ll look at a variety of media and genres which artists have utilized to criticize the present and imagine alternative futures: science fiction, situationism, a graphic novel, social problem fiction, poetry, anarchist manifestos, environmental essays and documentary film. Probable readings include: Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*; Paolo Bacigalupi, *Pump Six*; Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*; Paul Chadwick, *Concrete: Think Like a Mountain*; Paul Greenberg, *Four Fish*; Jim Hansen, *Storms of my Grandchildren*; Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction*; Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke*; Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*; Lydia Millet, *How the Dead Dream*; Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People*; Justin Taylor, *The Gospel of Anarchy*; Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones*; Alan Weisman, *The World without Us*. 