Description:

This course will adopt a critical approach to liberal humanist conceptions of the distinction and relation between individual subjects and “environment,” conceptions tied to liberal humanism’s fundamental racism, sexism, heterosexism and to the violent projects it has propelled and sustained (including slavery, colonialism, capitalist extraction and exploitation, among others). In the interest of imagining a future for life on/and earth, we will consider the history of some of these projects and the havoc they have wreaked. We will also consider understandings of interconnection, interdependence and “entanglement” by studying alternative philosophical, scientific and aesthetic practices, in indigenous, black radical, feminist, queer, Marxist and poststructuralist writing and visual art and in social and political organizing around the world.

Schedule:

Please note that this schedule is subject to change. We will be considering several, related works, included several types of works, each week. I will also post recommended materials that I might refer to in our discussions or that may be of interest to students who want to do further research. I may cut or add material (most likely cutting) to keep the workload manageable or change the status of material from recommended to required (or vice versa), depending on the directions our discussions take. I will alert you to any changes, cancellations, reductions or substitutions to materials in class and via announcements on NYU Classes, so please check for messages from me.

PART I: INTRODUCTION
How has the environment been imagined?

Week 1: January 29
Figuring Connections

Excerpt from Steven Soderberg, Contagion
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cparw3JLO60
Jorge Furtado, Isle of Flowers (1989, 18 min)
https://www.artandeducation.net/classroom/video/228423/jorge-furtado-isle-of-flowers

Recommended (or listen in class):
Louise Erdrich, “The Stone”

Week 2: February 5
Theorizing the Anthropocene/Racial Capitalocene

Required:
Glen Coulthard, excerpt (“Karl Marx, Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Dispossession…”) from Red Skin, White Masks, pp. 6-15
Silva Federici, excerpt (“Women: The New Commons…”), from Caliban and the Witch, pp. 85-97
Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, “Improvement and Preservation” and/or “The Surrounds” pp. 83-91

Recommended:
Françoise Vergès, “The Racial Capitalocene” 72-82
Glen Coulthard, “The Colonialism of the Present” (interview)
Silvia Federici, “The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women” (rest of chapter), pp. 61-132
Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, excerpt from The Undercommons (“Politics Surrounded,” pp 17-20)

Week 3: February 12
Art and the Environment

Required:
Steven Feld, “Echo-Muse-Ecology” plus music from accompanying CD
Adrian Heathfield, “Embers,” http://www.adrianheathfield.net/project/embers/

In class:
Ulahi, “Relaxing at the Creek”
Ana Mendieta, performance documentation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3M2b16bfp4
Zhang Huang, performance documentation
Li Binyuan, performance documentation
Gordon Matta-Clark, Incendiary Wafer, Museum

Recommended:
Other secondary materials on artist (articles, interviews, etc.), TBA

PART II: SITES/LOCALITIES/ZONES
We will examine environmental issues tied to various sites around the globe, but also the links between them. These weeks can be revised as necessary depending on student interest.
Week 4: February 19
Australia
Land Ownership and Use: Controversies over Pipelines and Songlines

Required:
Rachel O’Reilly, *Infractions*
Fred R. Myers, “Ways of Place-Making”
(up current news on wildfires, *Dark Emu* controversy, etc.)

Recommended:
Patrick Wolfe, “Should the Subaltern Speak?”
Gordon Chalmers, “‘Indigenous’ as ‘Not-Indigenous’ as ‘Us’”
Silas Piotrowski and Anne Ross, “Aboriginal Epistemologies and Interpretations of Art and Place”

Weeks 5: February 26
Latin America

Required:
Macarena Gomez-Barris, excerpts from *The Extraction Zone*
Carolina Caycedo, various projects
[http://carolinacaycedo.com/](http://carolinacaycedo.com/)
Francisco Huichaqueo, various projects

Recommended:
Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism*
Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, excerpt from *Cannibal Metaphysics*
Arturo Escobar, “Thinking-feeling with the Earth”
Projects by Ala Plástica

Week 6: March 4
The Caribbean
Plantation Ecologies and the Field of Transplants

Required:
Silva Wynter, “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation”
Poems by Martin Carter
Poems by Kamau Brathwaite
[https://annaleedavis.com/](https://annaleedavis.com/)
Human Rights Watch, “Antigua and Barbudo: Barbudans Fighting for Land Rights”

Recommended:
Interview with Brathwaite
Edouard Glissant, excerpts from Poetics of Relation
Wilson Harris, excerpts from The Guyana Quartet
Stephanie Black, excerpt from Life and Debt, https://vimeo.com/149178039

Week 7: March 11
Greater U.S./Turtle Island
Restoration and Renewal

Required:
Yarimar Bonilla and Naomi Klein, “The Trauma Doctrine”
Michelle Ty, “Trash and the Ends of Infrastructure
Nicholas Reo, Radio Interview
Robin Wall Kimmerer, excerpts from Braiding Sweetgrass

Recommended:
Nicholas Reo, et. al., “Invasive Species, Indigenous Stewards, and Vulnerability Discourse”
Gregory Cajete, excerpts from Native Science

Week 8: Spring Break

Week 9: March 25
South Asia

Required:
Vandana Shiva, “From Quanta to the Seed”
Vandana Shiva, “Seed and Earth”
Aarthi Vadde, “The Backwaters Sphere”
Arundhati Roy, “The Greater Common Good”
http://www.narmada.org/gcg/gcg.html

Recommended:
Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace”
Arundhati Roy, The God of Small Things
Arundhati Roy, “India: Intimations of an ending”
https://www.thenation.com/article/arundhati-roy-assam-modi/
Vandana Shiva, “A Message from Dr. Vandana Shiva”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DV4H-Pu4qYE&fbclid=IwAR1nx0XF76Eo7eNtl4C_aKFxsNn-64swDfGC9mkdaToJnmM9r4DDMJnBAI&M&app=desktop

PART III: SPECULATIVE SITES/LOCALITIES/ZONES
What other forms of habitation does the history of violent displacement, exploitation and toxic waste make it possible or necessary to imagine?
How can we imagine modes of living with that don’t depend on the destruction of others?
What happens if we begin not with the distinction between subject and world, in which the world or is a container or resource but interaction, intra-action and entanglement?

Week 10: April 1
Survival, Endurance, Reproduction in Speculative Zones

Required:
Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, Chapters 1 and 2
Octavia Butler, “Bloodchild”

Recommended:
Octavia Butler, Lilith’s Brood Trilogy

Week 11: April 8
More on Survival, Endurance, Reproduction in Speculative Zones

Required:
Darwin, excerpts from Origin of Species (including sections on Malthus)
Lynn Margulis and Dorian Sagan, TBA
Donna Haraway, excerpt from Staying with the Trouble

Recommended:
Thomas Malthus, An Essay on the Principle of Population
Jade Sasser, excerpts from On Infertile Ground
James Lovelock, excerpts from The Revenge of Gaia

Week 12: April 15
Unexpected, Underground and Queer Affiliations

Required:
Kathryn Yusoff, “Queer Coal”
Heather Davis, “The Queer Futurity of Plastic”
https://vimeo.com/158044006
Anna Tsing, excerpt from The Mushroom at the End of the World
Excerpts from various speculative realist texts, TBA

Recommended:
Anna Tsing, et. al., excerpts from Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet

Week 13: April 22
Intra-Action

Required:
Karen Barad, “Nature’s Queer Performativity”
Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Toward a Black Feminist Poethics” and “Difference without Separability”
In Class:
Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, *Serpent Rain or 4 Waters - Deep Implicancy*
Julieta Aranda, found footage from Kiribati

Recommended:
Karen Barad, “No Small Matter”
Jane Bennett, excerpt from *Vibrant Matter*

Weeks 14 and 15: April 29 and May 6
Student Presentations

**Requirements:**

**Attendance and Participation:** You will be expected to attend class, but exceptions will be made for observance of religious holidays (I will adhere to NYU’s policy, which I have posted below) or for illness and other emergencies. If you are not able to attend class, you are responsible for checking with another student in the course and/or me, during office hours, to ensure that you do not miss any important information. I also expect you to contribute to class discussions but that does not necessarily have to mean talking.

**Reading:** You will be expected to read the assigned readings before class and be prepared to share their impressions, questions and concerns. All texts will be available in pdf form via NYU Classes. I will also post recommended readings, including longer portions of the texts we read, related items and other items that come up in discussion so you will have access to those materials if you want to pursue them further. Students will be invited to contribute to the recommended reading list as well.

**Midterm Conversation:** I am available to meet at any time, but I do require you to meet with me at least once, sometime between week 6 and 8. I will circulate a sign-up sheet and make sure we find a time that works for you. At that point you can bring in materials—whatever form you like, written or otherwise—that you think you might like to develop for a final projects. We can also discuss any questions or ideas you have regarding the class, the readings, artworks, etc. that we have been considering, and anything else you have been investigating and might like to address in the course or in your final project.

**Final Project:** You will also be required to turn in a final project, responding thoughtfully in some way, in some medium, to the issues we have discussed in class. This could be a paper interpreting one of the practices we studied together or one of the ones posted on the collective archive. It could also be a demonstration or product of a creative aesthetic or social or other practice you yourself have formulated with a 2-3 page paper explaining what you tried to do and why and what happened when you did it. Feel free to use the space of this project to pursue work you are already doing or work that you want to try out for the first time. I will circulate a more specifically worded assignment before the papers are due. You are free to do your final project individually or in collaboration with other people in the class.
Grading:

30% of the grade is based on attendance and participation (verbal or otherwise).
30% of the grade is based on your completing the midterm meeting with me.
40% of the grade is based on the timely and thoughtful completion of your final projects. These will be graded. The grade will be based on the depth of reflection and interpretation of the practice you write about or try out. We will discuss this more fully in class.

Wellness and Accommodations for Disabilities:

Your health and safety are a priority at NYU. If you experience any health or mental health issues during this course, we encourage you to utilize the support services of the 24/7 NYU Wellness Exchange 212-443-9999.

If you are broke and hungry, please take advantage of the NYU Courtesy Meal program: https://www.nyu.edu/students/student-information-and-resources/courtesy-meals.html
Free meal kits are also always available in the Cinema Studies office (721 Broadway, 6th Floor)

Also, accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. If you may require an academic accommodation due to a qualified disability, physical or mental, please register with the Moses Center 212-998-4980. Please let your instructor know if you need help connecting to these resources.

Observance of Religious Holidays:

We will follow NYU’s policy on the observance of religious holidays. The policy specifies:

1. That students who anticipate being absent because of any religious observance should, whenever possible, notify faculty in advance of such anticipated absence.

2. That, whenever feasible, examinations and assignment deadlines should not be scheduled on religious holidays. Any student absent from class because of his/her religious beliefs shall not be penalized for any class, examination, or assignment deadline missed on that day or days.

3. That if examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled, any student who is unable to attend class because of religious beliefs shall be permitted the opportunity to make up any examination or to extend any assignment deadline missed on that day or days. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the University for making available to the student an opportunity to make up examinations or to extend assignment deadlines.

4. That no adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student who avails him/ herself of the provisions of the resolution.