MAKING ART IN THE ANTHROPOCENE:  
The Creative Research Project on Ecology, Species, and Vibrant Matter

Professors Una Chaudhuri and Frederick Ertl

Course Numbers:
AHSEM-UA 193.001; ENGL-UA 800.002 (English); ANST-UA 393.001 (Animal Studies)
ENVS-UA 593.001 (Environmental Studies); DRLIT-UA 971.002 (Dramatic Lit); THEA-UT 801.004
(Drama/Tisch)

Fall 2013
Mondays 9.30 AM to 12.00 PM; 7 East 12th Street, Room 325 (SB)

Una’s Office Hours: Mondays, 1-3, plus by appointment. <uc1@nyu.edu>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

“Either stop writing, or write like a rat!” In one of the most provocative texts in contemporary animal philosophy, the French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari famously propose “becoming animal” as a liberating artistic practice. This workshop-cum-seminar will engage with key themes in recent “post-humanist” discourse by applying and testing them in our own creative practice. We will read recent theories of species, ecology, and matter (by writers like Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, and Timothy Morton) and we will study a variety of literary, cinematic and visual art works that seem to resonate with key themes of that discourse (works like Wallace Shawn’s Grasses of a Thousand Colors, Cesar Aira’s An Episode in the Life of a Landscape Painter, Marina Zurkow’s “Slurb,” Marian Engel’s Bear, and Robinson Devor’s Zoo). Our seminar-style investigations of these texts and artworks will regularly be applied in workshop sessions where we will use space, objects, movement, sound, imagery, and writing to explore the aesthetic implications of these theoretical ideas. A main interest of this course is to experiment with “creative research,” a way of doing intellectual work in which art-making is regarded as—and systematically used as—a mode of knowledge and inquiry, and in which ideas are developed by doing and making as well as by thinking/writing/speaking. Prior artistic training/practice is welcomed but not required; however, all students must be willing to and interested in exploring their "inner artist."
BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE IN THE NYU BOOKSTORE:

Aira, Cesaire, *Episode in the Life of a Landscape Painter*
Albee, Albert, *The Goat*
Churchill, Caryl, *Far Away*
Engel, Marian, *Bear*
Ghosh, Amitav, *The Hungry Tide* (not at bookstore, please buy on your own?)
Heinberg, Richard and Daniel Lerch, (eds), *The Post-Carbon Reader*
Morton, Timothy, *The Ecological Thought*
Shawn, Wallace, *Grasses of a Thousand Colors*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

1. Punctuality, and full attendance. Except for documented medical absences, missing class will lower your grade.
2. Readings (and screenings) to be completed before the class for which they are assigned.
3. Thoughtful and energetic participation in class discussions, activities, and weekly art-making assignments.
4. Formal Assignments, and percentage of final grade for each:
   - Quality of your work on items 1 to 3 above = 40%
   - Two analytical papers
     - 1. On a work (of art or writing in any genre) related to the course’s topic. (5 pp. minimum) First draft due September 23; Final draft due October 17 = 10%
     - 2. On two contrasting works related to the course’s topic; (7 pp. minimum) First draft due Nov 4, final draft due Nov 25 = 20%
   - Final Project. Working in pairs, you will take on the subject of one of the chapters of *The Post-Carbon Reader*. You will
     - find out as much as possible about that subject,
     - find (in discussion with Una) and assign to the class, a work of eco-theory related to that subject
     - find art works about that subject
     - make an in-class presentation about that subject and some of those artworks
     - write a paper (10 pp. minimum) about some of the art works, AND
     - incorporate that subject into an artwork
     - The artwork and paper will be due in class on December 11th.
     - = 30%
SCHEDULE:

Sept. 9: Introduction: Art, Ecology, Knowledge, Us

Sept. 16: Thinking With Art

Sept. 23: Placing Ecology
~Timothy Morton, “Thinking Big,” Chapter 1 of The Ecological Thought
~Cesar Aira, Episode in the Life of a Landscape Painter

Sept. 30: Making Knowledge

Oct. 7: Listening to Things
~Jane Bennett, Chapters 1, 2, and 8 of Vibrant Matter (Duke UP, 2010), and “Powers of the Hoard: Further Notes on Material Agency,” in ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, MINERAL: Ethics and Objects, Edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. Punctum Books, 2012 (available for download on-line)
~Caryl Churchill, Far Away

Oct. 14: No class: Fall Break

Oct. 21: Living with Catastrophe
~Wallace Shawn, Grasses of a Thousand Colors
~Jeff Nichols, Take Shelter (film)

Oct. 28: The View from Elsewhere
~Rob Nixon, “Introduction” and “Epilogue” to Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor
~Amitav Ghosh, The Hungry Tide
~Wallace Shawn, “The Fever”

OCTOBER 30, 7 P.M.: CLASS TRIP TO SEE NATIONAL THEATRE OF BRITAIN’S BROADCAST OF FRANKENSTEIN AT NYU’S SKIRBALL CENTER.

Nov. 4: Loving (as a) Species
~Elizabeth Grosz, “Darwin and the Split Between Natural and Sexual Selection” and “Art and the Animal” from Part 3 of Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections of Life and Art. Available on Ebrary, through Bobcat
~Marian Engel, Bear
~Edward Albee, The Goat
~Robinson Dever, Zoo (film; available in Bobst) FIRST DRAFT OF PAPER TWO DUE
Nov. 11: TBA

Nov. 18: Student Presentations on Climate (Jane and Hannah), and Water (Anjali and Sarah)
~Readings: Relevant sections of *The Carbon Reader*, plus one eco-critical article per topic to be assigned by presenters

Nov. 25: Student Presentations on Biodiversity (Eric and Anna) and Food (Zee and Nicolette)
~Readings: Relevant sections of *The Carbon Reader*, plus one eco-critical article per topic to be assigned by presenters

**SECOND (FINAL) DRAFT OF PAPER TWO DUE**

Dec. 2: Student Presentations on Population (Bernado and Cindy), and Cities (Amanda and Sunaura)
~Readings: Relevant sections of *The Carbon Reader*, plus one eco-critical article per topic to be assigned by presenters

Dec. 9: Student Presentation on Waste (Alyssa and Tiffany)
~Readings: Relevant sections of *The Carbon Reader*, plus one eco-critical article per topic to be assigned by presenters

Dec 11: COURSE CONCLUSION: Artwork presentations. **PAPER THREE DUE**