

## LIT 6934: Climate Fiction

Professor Terry Harpold

Fall 2019

Time: W, pers. 3–5 (9:35 AM–12:35 PM)

Location: Turlington (TUR) 4112

office hours: Tu, 2–4 PM & by appt. (TUR 4105)

email: [tharpold@ufl.edu](mailto:tharpold@ufl.edu)

home page for Terry Harpold: <https://users.clas.ufl.edu/tharpold/>

e-Learning (Canvas) site for LIT 6934 (*registered students only*): <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>

Imagining Climate Change: <https://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu>

### Course Description

“While it is clearly time to dismantle Anthropocene logic, there is no need to wait until the end of this world to begin to conjure livable ones. There are as yet other worlds in this world. And there are, as yet, worlds to come. But which worlds will be livable? And what makes a livable world?”

– Natasha Myers<sup>1</sup>



Big Dune, Amargosa Valley, Nevada, origin of the “dune sea” in Claire Vaye Watkin’s *Gold Fame Citrus*. Image by PD Tilman, licensed CC BY-SA 2.0.

As we enter an era of increasing climate instability, the geophysical realities and cultural imaginary of climate will shape how we envisage the collective futures of humans and other living beings of the Earth. In this course we will investigate the contribution of the arts and humanities to our understanding of climate change. We will read a wide range of climate-related texts from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, some nonfiction (climate studies, animal studies, plant studies, environmental humanities), but mostly from the emerging textual and

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<sup>1</sup> “How to Grow Livable Worlds; Ten Not-So-Easy-Steps.”

graphic genres of *climate fiction*, stories that are grounded in realities of planetary climate crisis, mass extinction, climate-induced migration, and economic collapse: a world in which former habits of mind and body are incompatible with situations on the ground, in the air, and in the water. The diverse authors whose works we will study (Ballard, Ellis, Ghosh, Giono, Itäranta, Latour, Le Guin, Myers, Muir, Neufeld, Powers, Stengers, Turner, Watkins, Wright, Zylinska and others) show that creating new habits is difficult; it is easier to find fear, cynicism, and despair – none of which responses, it is clear, is up to the challenges of the real futures that approach us.

Much of what we will read is, implicitly and explicitly, an indictment of the blind hubris, cruel appetite, and reckless improvidence that have pushed us all toward terrible ends. This course proposes that the literary imagination of climate, haunted by the allures and negations of crisis, may also point in the direction of an *ethic* of climate that embraces critical reflection, shared responsibility, and hopeful resolve.

Graded writing assignments include collaborative moderation of in-class discussions, an abstract of a final writing project, participation in an end-of-semester climate fiction symposium, and a final draft of the writing project. Writing projects may be scholarly or creative (e.g., climate fiction or poetry), with instructor approval.

### **Required Texts to Purchase or Download**

These texts are available at the UF Bookstore and from online vendors. Used and electronic versions (Apple Books, Kindle, pdfs, etc.) are permissible – indeed they are encouraged<sup>2</sup> – so long as the version of the text you read is *otherwise identical to the editions noted below*. I encourage you whenever possible to buy from independent booksellers. If you choose to buy physical texts, I recommend sources such as [Abebooks.com](http://Abebooks.com) and [Alibris.com](http://Alibris.com) that serve independent booksellers.

Ballard, J.G. *The Drowned World*. Liveright, 2013. Originally published 1962. ISBN 9780871403629. 240 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Ellis, Erle C. *Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN 9780198792987. 208 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press, 2016. ISBN 978-0226526812. 206 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

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<sup>2</sup> See my “Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom,” below.

———. *The Hungry Tide*. Mariner Books, 2014. Originally published 2004. ISBN 978-0618711666. 352 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Giono, Jean. *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Illustrated by Michael McCurdy, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007. ISBN 9781933392813. 72 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Itäranta, Emmi. *Memory of Water*. Harper Voyager, 2014. ISBN 9780062326157. 272 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Latour, Bruno. *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Translated by Catherine Porter, Polity Press, 2018. ISBN 9781509530571. 140 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Word for World is Forest*. Tor Books, 2010. Originally published 1972. ISBN 9780765324641. 192 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Neufeld, Josh. *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*. Pantheon, 2010. ISBN 9780375714887. 208 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Powers, Richard. *The Overstory*. Norton, 2018. ISBN 9780393356687. 512 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Turner, George. *The Sea and Summer*. Gollancz, 2012. Originally published 1987. ISBN 9780575118690. 384 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Watkins, Claire Vaye. *Gold Fame Citrus*. Riverhead Books, 2015. ISBN 9781594634246. 352 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

Wright, Alexis. *The Swan Book*. Washington Square Press, 2018. ISBN 9781501124792. 320 pp. (print). *Also available in Apple Books and Kindle formats.*

These and other required and recommended readings for the course are available for free via the course's electronic reserves (Ares, <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/>) or at the URLs indicated below.

Muir, John. "Cedar Keys." *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*. Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1916, pp. 123–42. *Out of copyright: available at* <https://archive.org/details/thousandmilewal00muir/page/n11> .

———. "The American Forests." *Our National Parks*, new and enlarged ed., Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1909, pp. 331–65. *Out of copyright: available at* <https://archive.org/details/ournationalparks1909muir/page/n8> .

Myers, Natasha. "How to Grow Livable Worlds: Ten Not-So-Easy Steps." *The World to Come: Art in the Age of the Anthropocene*, edited by Kerry Oliver-Smith, Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida, 2018, pp. 52–64.

Stengers, Isabelle. *In Catastrophic Times. Resisting the Coming Barbarism*. Translated by Andrew Goffey. Open Humanities Press, 2015. ISBN 9781785420108. 156 pp. (print). Open access: available at <http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/in-catastrophic-times> .

Watkins, Claire Vaye. "On Pandering." *Tin House*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2015, pp. 31-42. Available at: <https://tinhouse.com/on-pandering/> .

Wright, Alexis. "Telling the Untold Stories." *Overland*, vol. 234, 2019. Available at <https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-234/featuretelling-the-untold-stories/>

Zylinska, Joanna. *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*. Open Humanities Press, 2014. ISBN 9781607853299. 152 pp. (print). Open access: available at <http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/minimal-ethics-for-the-anthropocene/> .

## Course Calendar

*Deadlines or events outside of normal class meeting times are marked with an asterisk (\*). Readings marked as "Ares" are available on electronic reserve. Topics of some class meetings will be determined after the semester begins.*

*Note that this version of the calendar includes changes following hurricane-related course cancellations.*

### ***New histories***

W, Aug 21                      *Course introduction*  
*Signature reading exercise described*  
*Ellis, Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction*

\* M, Aug 26                      *Signature reading exercise due*  
*Students must notify TH of assigned texts whose discussions they*  
*would like to moderate*

### ***The forgotten paradises of the reborn sun***

W, Aug 28                      Ballard, *The Drowned World*

### ***Resisting barbarism***

W, Sept 4                      ***Class meeting cancelled due to Hurricane Dorian***

W, Sept 11                      Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times*  
Neufeld, *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*  
Recommended reading: *A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*  
(original webcomic):  
<http://www.smithmag.net/afterthedeluge/2007/01/01/prologue-1/>

### ***The word for world***

W, Sept 18                      Myers, "How to Grow Livable Worlds; Ten Not-So-Easy-Steps" (Ares)  
Le Guin, *The Word for World is Forest*  
Recommended reading/viewing: Myers and Liberona, "Becoming  
Sensor in Sentient Worlds" (<https://becomingsensor.com> )

W, Sept 25                      Muir, "The American Forests" (Ares)  
Powers, *The Overstory*

W, Oct 2                        Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees*  
Powers, *The Overstory*

### ***Entr'acte times***

W, Oct 9                        Ghosh, *The Great Derangement*  
Latour, *Down to Earth*

\* M, Oct 14                      *Abstract of final writing project due (5 PM)*

W, Oct 16                        Wright, *The Swan Book*  
Recommended reading: Wright, "Telling the Untold Stories"

\* Tu, Oct 22                      Guest lecture by Temiti Lehartel (Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier  
3) on Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book*. The lecture is sponsored

by [Imagining Climate Change](#). Note the location and time: Marston Library L-136, 11:30 AM – 1:40 PM.

- W, Oct 23 Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*
- W, Oct 30 Turner, *The Sea and Summer*
- \* Th, Oct 31 *Deadline for submission of paper abstracts to ICFA 41*
- W, Nov 6 Watkins, *Gold Fame Citrus*  
*Recommended reading: Watkins, "On Pandering"*
- W, Nov 13 Zylinska, *Minimal Ethics*

***We can pick our own ending***

- W, Nov 20 Itäranta, *Memory of Water*
- W, Nov 27 **No class meeting (Thanksgiving Break)**

***The transmundane furnace***

- W, Dec 4 Muir, "Cedar Keys" (Ares)  
*Final class meeting – course debriefing*
- \* F, Dec 6 **Graduate Student Climate Fiction Symposium, Pugh Hall 210, time & schedule TBA**
- W, Dec 11 **Final writing/research project due by 11:59 PM**
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## Evaluation of Performance, Attendance Requirements & Other Course Policies

Your final grade in this course will be determined by five assignments, each representing a portion of the grade:

Signature reading exercise	3%
Moderated in-class discussion	12%
Abstract of writing project:	10%
Presentation of first draft of writing project at climate fiction symposium	15%
Final writing project	60%

**Signature reading exercise.** This is a short writing exercise that will help participants in the course understand your interests and habits; it's essentially a report on your recent reading for pleasure. (I will complete the exercise also.) This is a good way to start off our conversations this semester and to identify shared interests in the class. The exercise is due five days after the first class meeting. Students who register for the course nearer to the end of drop/add can make up this assignment during the second week of class. If you complete this exercise and meet its (very) basic requirements, you will receive a grade of 100 on the assignment. In effect, the assignment is worth 3 free points toward your final grade. The procedure for the signature reading assignment will be reviewed in the first class meeting.

**Moderating in-class discussion.** Each student in the course will moderate class discussion of one assigned reading, beginning with the third class meeting (September 4). Moderating a discussion means preparing a short list of key questions and observations (max. 2 single-spaced pp.) concerning the reading, and... moderating the class's discussion of the list. The list must be circulated to the class via Canvas no later than 24 hours before the meeting at which the text is discussed. The list will not limit our conversations about the text but it should serve as a framework for them. More than one student may serve as a moderator for a single text. More than one student may moderate discussion during a class meeting. Not every reading or class may have a student moderator, in which case I will fulfill that duty.

**Before the second class meeting (no later than August 26) you must send me a ranked list of three texts/class meetings that you would prefer to moderate, and any dates during the semester when know you cannot attend the class.** I will collate students' preferences and assign the individual texts/meetings to be moderated and announce the results before the second class meeting.

**Final writing project.** The final writing assignment is a scholarly-critical or creative project of 10–12 pp. in length – essentially, the draft of a 20 minute conference paper – on

subjects or texts discussed in the course or relevant to the field of climate fiction. The paper may include or provide an overview of a digital humanities component. In any case, the paper can – and should – reflect your own research interests, the periods, disciplines, and genres in which you primarily work.

The writing project is completed in three stages:

- A 300–500 word abstract of the project, due by 5 PM, October 14. I will review this and return it to you with suggestions for revisions within five days. This will give you sufficient time to revise the abstract as required before the submission deadline (October 31) of the 41<sup>st</sup> annual International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts (see below).
- A first draft of the project, ready for presentation as a conference paper, to be read at the end-of-semester Climate Fiction Symposium (see below).
- A final draft of the project, due shortly after the symposium. This version of the project may be extended to as long as 20 pp.

Creative projects, such as original short climate fictions, or collections of original poetry of correspondingly appropriate length and theme, are permissible. Creative projects are subject to the same schedule of abstracts/prospectuses and end-of-semester deadlines as are critical projects. Creative projects must be approved by TH early in the semester.

**Graduate climate fiction symposium.** The final event of the semester will be a half-day Graduate Climate Fiction Symposium, tentatively scheduled for Friday, December 6, in Pugh Hall 210 (time and schedule TBA). The symposium will be your opportunity to present a first complete draft of your final project to a public. Details of the symposium will be discussed early in the semester.

*There are no other graded assignments in this course. There are no extra-credit assignments.*

**Course reading load & warning.** The course reading load is substantial but not onerous. The pace of our discussions will vary according to the complexity of texts we read and the need to focus on selected portions of the texts. The page counts shown above are fair measures of reading load but they may be deceiving. Some of the texts we will read are illustrated, some – especially the electronic facsimiles of original editions – use larger margins and font sizes than would modern editions, some include extensive scholarly apparatus. (Which of course you *should* also read.) You should always aim to have completed reading each text by the last class period in which it is scheduled to be discussed.



A few of the texts we will read include representations of class, race, and gender that are by contemporary standards outdated and mildly offensive. A few of the texts include depictions of physical violence and indirect depictions of sexual violence.

**Guest lecture by Temiti Lehartel.** On October 22, [Imagining Climate Change](#) will sponsor a guest lecture by Temiti Lehartel (Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier 3, France) on Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book*, one of assigned texts we are reading this semester. Lehartel is a rising scholar of Aboriginal South Pacific climate fiction. You are *not* required to attend the lecture, which is held on a day and at a time that is not our usual meeting time; however, attendance is strongly encouraged.

**Trees!** A growing body of scientific research has shown that planting new trees outside of existing forests and agricultural lands has the potential to increase global forest canopy by more than 25% and to reduce atmospheric carbon by as much as 25% at tree maturity. Tree restoration is among the most effective climate change mitigation solutions available to us.<sup>3</sup> I encourage you to participate in a local initiative to increase tree cover in our region.

The Office of the Alachua County Arborist, Department of Parks and Conservation Lands, supervises volunteer tree plantings in and around the city of Gainesville. The plantings emphasize high-value tree species appropriate for site conditions on County owned right-of-ways, developed County properties, and properties directly influencing the public sphere. Of priority are trees that provide shade for bicycling and human pedestrians, provide erosion control, and support and contribute to wildlife biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Tree plantings are fun, low-effort undertakings to beautify our community and to help foster a sustainable local ecosystem for decades to come. Pretty much, you help to dig a hole a few feet deep, drop in a juvenile tree, refill, brace, bank the tree with mulch, water, and repeat. No prior tree planting experience is necessary. Needed tools, gloves, reflective safety vests, potable water, and vegan snacks are provided. You should wear lightweight but sturdy outdoor clothing and closed-toed shoes. A hat, sunscreen, and insect repellent are recommended. Typically, a planting takes 3–4 hours, usually beginning around 9 AM. You must complete a volunteer release form before the planting begins. See <http://imagining-climate.clas.ufl.edu/trees> for planting dates and locations. *The Office of the Alachua County Arborist is unaffiliated with the University of Florida.*

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<sup>3</sup> Bastin, Jean-François, *et al.*, "The Global Tree Restoration Potential." *Science* 365, 76–79 (2019) <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/365/6448/76>.

**ICFA 41.** The theme of the 41<sup>st</sup> International Conference on the Arts, held in Orlando March 18–21, 2020, is “Climate Change and the Anthropocene” (<https://www.fantastic-arts.org>). The course calendar is structured so that students who may wish to present their work at the ICFA in the spring will have, in effect, a ready-made abstract and initial draft of their papers, in time for the conference’s deadlines. ICFA 41 is an uncommon opportunity to directly connect work in a graduate seminar such as ours with the theme of the major international academic conference in the fantastic. I will encourage you to avail yourself of that opportunity.

**Grading scheme and graded assignments.** The evaluation method in this course is consistent with UF’s policies on grading (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Grades are calculated on a numeric scale, as below:

A	90–100	A–	87–89		
B+	84–86	B	80–83	B–	77–79
C+	74–76	C	70–73		

If you feel that you’ve been unfairly graded on an assignment, you may make a case in writing for a better grade. I will consider no grade changes without this written rationale.

You may make up a missed assignment only if you have a written medical excuse from a doctor, a signed letter from a judge or law enforcement officer (if you are called for jury duty or to testify in court, for example), or if a death or serious illness or injury occurs in your family. You should contact me as soon as possible when you anticipate a delay in the submission of graded work. This is of especial importance in the event that you may not be able to participate in your workgroup’s oral presentation.

**Attendance & lateness.** The texts we will review are complex and challenging. You cannot reasonably expect to master them if you do not keep up with required reading or do not come to class prepared and on time. Class discussions will often include materials not among the assigned readings. For these reasons, your presence in class is essential and is required. **I take attendance. After two missed class meetings, I reserve the right to lower your final course grade by five points for each additional class period that you miss.** I treat excused and unexcused absences alike in this regard. It is your responsibility to keep track of your absences and to make sure that you complete all required work. If you must miss class, make sure that you turn in any assignments due for that day, and that you are ready if another assignment is due on the day you return to class. In the event of a prolonged illness or other emergency you should notify me as soon as possible so that we may make provisions to insure that you do not fall behind.

Lateness is disruptive to others in the classroom, and is strongly discouraged. If you are more than 30 minutes late to class, this will be considered an absence.

If you have special classroom access, seating, or other needs because of disability, do not hesitate to bring those to my attention so that I may make appropriate accommodations. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the UF Disability Resource Center (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>) and provide me with appropriate documentation.

If you are unable to attend any part of a class meeting or work on a course assignment because these coincide with the timing of religious observances you must notify me of this conflict in advance, so that we may make appropriate adjustments to relevant assignment deadlines.

***Use of computers and other electronic devices in class.*** You may use personal computers and other electronic devices in class for purposes related to class discussion and collaboration. Casual WWW browsing, emailing, chatting, texting, etc., unrelated to classroom activities will not be tolerated. In the event of a violation of this policy, I reserve the right to prohibit your individual use of all electronic devices in class. Apart from those times when I have approved their use in advance, cell phones, pagers, and similar communication devices may not be used during class meetings and must be set to silent ring at the start of class.

***Course evaluation.*** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

***Policy on academic honesty.*** The University community's policies and methods regarding academic honesty, your obligations to me and mine to you with regard to academic honesty, are spelled out in the UF Student Honor Code, which is available online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this course. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of graded assignments submitted for this course.

- Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
- False claims of performance or work submitted by a student for requirements of this course.

I am obliged to act on any suspected act of academic misconduct. If you are found to have engaged in misconduct penalties may include a reduced or failing grade for the course or other disciplinary proceedings, as per the recommendation of the Dean of Students. If you have any concern that you may not have made appropriate use of the work of others in your research or writing for this course, please confer with me before you submit the assignment. You should retain all graded materials that you receive from me until you receive your final course grade.

**Emergency services.** **U Matter, We Care** serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor overnight and during weekends.

Note also these support services:

- The University Counseling Center – 301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>
- Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1171
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union – 352-392-1601
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center – 352-392-1161
- University Police Department – 352-392-1111 (non-emergency); *call 9-1-1 for emergencies*

**Policy on environmentally unsustainable activity in the classroom.** When possible I will distribute all course materials via paper-sparing digital media. I encourage you to purchase e-book editions of assigned texts when they are available, or used copies of print texts, and to return those to circulation if you choose not to keep them at the end of the course. (Donating your unwanted books to the Alachua County [Friends of the Library](#) annual book sale is a good way to get them into other readers' hands and to help raise a bit of cash for our county's excellent but criminally underfunded public libraries.) If you do elect to keep your books, share them with others after the course is over. And a final appeal to your common sense: bring food and/or beverages to the classroom only in reusable containers. Please, no food or beverages in single-use containers and no single-use, unrecyclable cutlery or straws.