

Arts and the Anthropocene: Crisis and Resilience in North Carolina Waterways

Course Syllabus, Fall 2020

Weekly Sessions: Thursdays, 1:45-4:15
Zoom: <https://duke.zoom.us/j/94680579936>

Course Instructors and Team Leaders:

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Bass Connection Team Members:

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Description:

Arts and the Anthropocene explores how visual, theatrical, and sonic arts can play a role in educating various publics, provoking action, and prefiguring resilient futures in the era of the Anthropocene.

The group will start by exploring how both scientists and artists of all stripes have sought to address social and ecological crises and entanglements. We will invite scientists, artists and local advocacy organizations to visit our class and discuss issues related to the Anthropocene and our state, including how climate change is impacting North Carolina's ecology and human communities. We will hear from scientists and community activists alike, aiming to understand how ecological and social impacts interact. Grounding these visits in readings about climate change, the Anthropocene, and environmental justice, students will be prepared to begin imagining how arts-based interventions might best illuminate or reimagine various ecological and social relationships of urgency here in North Carolina.

Based on the work we undertake this fall students will develop art proposals to be submitted at the end of the semester. In the Spring semester, these proposals will help to inform the creation of a group art project, the content of which will arise out of our research in the Fall semester. This artwork could take the form of sound art, video and animation, puppetry, photography or installation, and will emerge directly out of the collective research of the Bass Connection process.

Working with artists and scientists, we aim to tell collaborative stories of the Anthropocene in North Carolina, building a bridge between disciplines as we imagine how art experiences can raise the consciousness of audiences, helping to nurture a growing awareness of how humans are shifting the world we live within.

Project Structure:

During this Fall semester student team members and the co-leaders will meet in a weekly seminar/laboratory setting. This will not be a lecture-based course, but an experience co-created by all team members (yourself included!). Responsibilities for facilitation and planning will be taken up by small groups, and emphasis will be placed on preparing well to engage with our invited guests. As the Fall moves along, we will create space to reflect on how the semester's work might inform our artmaking in the Spring semester. We will aim, at every turn, to make this a fun, engaging, flexible and generative space for learning and discovery.

Class Organization/ Communication:

- This syllabus is an evolving document that will be continually updated. Please refer to the digital copy on teams for the most up to date information about assignments, guests, and course design.
- We will primarily rely on Teams for all communication. However, feel free to email Jonathan and Raquel if necessary for a quicker response to a question. Please always include both Jonathan and Raquel on all course-related emails.
- You can find the Teams link, Zoom link and other relevant apps that we will make use of in class at:
 - [Kits.duke.edu](https://teams.duke.edu)
- Our weekly sessions will be held primarily on Zoom at the following link:
 - <https://duke.zoom.us/j/94680579936>

Grading:

Class Participation: 20%

Class Leading: 20%

Weekly Response Journals: 21% (7 journals at 3% each)

Book Presentation: 9%

Art Proposal: 30%

Class Participation:

This Bass Connection project is designed as a laboratory space. All participants are expected to co-create the experience. We will hold one another accountable for arriving to class prepared and ready to engage with the topic at hand. We will be facing the unique challenge of fostering a collaborative, co-creative space while holding our sessions primarily online. As a starting point, everyone will be expected to participate in the Zoom sessions with microphones and cameras ON the whole time. We will schedule a longer than usual break (aiming for 30 mins.) in the middle of each session to give everyone a chance to refresh and recharge for the second half of the session. As we move forward with the semester, we will work to develop best practices for creating an exciting and engaging collaborative space, despite the challenges of operating in a virtual setting.

Class Leading:

Teams of 2-3 students will sign up to lead one of six full session over the course of the semester. For your assigned session, you can expect to research the topic and guest(s) ahead of time, provide advance reading materials, introduce the guest(s) and facilitate the day's session (in collaboration and consultation with the Raquel and Jonathan). This will be an opportunity to

develop skills around research, pedagogical preparation, and facilitation. Please make the most of this opportunity, as it will allow for each session to be robust and engaging.

Weekly Response Journals:

By Monday (at midnight) following our nine regular sessions (8/27, 9/3, 9/10, 9/17, 9/24, 10/1, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29), please submit a brief journal reflection (a couple of paragraphs in written form will suffice). In your journal entries, you may choose to 1) synthesize that week's readings, guests presentation and discussion; 2) list questions that the session raised for you; 3) put the material in conversation with other material we've covered (or that you draw from elsewhere); 4) describe what you find useful or interesting about that week's session; 5) write poetry or creative prose inspired by it; 6) create a response in the form of a sketch, painting, animation, music composition or TikTok video; or 6) blow our minds with a creative take on the material that none of us would have expected. 😊 It's up to you how you decide to approach each entry. They will be posted on our Teams site and will be freely visible to other students. The goal of these journals is to encourage your ongoing reflection on the material and engagement with your fellow team members. You will only be graded on 7 response journals, which means you are free to skip two over the course of the semester. See dates for Weekly Response Journals in the course design section below.

Book Presentation:

In pairs, pick a text from the forthcoming bibliography to read (in full) over the course of the semester. Read the book with attention to what will be most useful to our team in refining our thinking about the Anthropocene here in NC, and how our artistic intervention in the Spring might best respond to issues surrounding it. During the three sessions on Oct. 22, Oct. 29, and Nov. 5, you will make a presentation on the book for the class. The presentation should last 10-15 minutes and should effectively summarize the primary themes of the text, drawing out what will be most useful to our team.

Art Proposals:

The final project for the semester will be to create an art proposal that aims to synthesize our research over the course of the semester into a vision for an artwork, or an element of an artwork, that reflects on / engages with / provokes / iterates on / implodes the issues raised in our study of the Anthropocene and North Carolina's waterways. The process of creating an art proposal will be introduced mid-semester, and you will be given a structured way to develop and refine your proposal over the course of several weeks, receiving feedback from our team. The 'exam period' at the end of the semester will be an opportunity to present and discuss your final art proposal with the team. It is our hope that these art proposals will inform our work in the Spring semester when we begin creating a collaborative artwork that builds on the fall semester's research.

Reading Exercises:

All readings will be posted on the Teams site in the session for which they are due. We will be mindful of not assigning too much reading, so please read closely what is assigned for that day and come prepared to contribute to a lively discussion.

Listening Exercises:

When listening to assigned recordings, we ask that you listen on headphones, shelf speakers, car audio systems, or other comparable systems. That means no listening on computer or phone speakers (you may of course do this *in addition* to your focused listening). We encourage you to develop a listening practice that is as focused as your reading practice. You may want to listen more than once. Take notes. Listen for how the sounds are recorded, processed and presented. Notice how the sounds makes you feel. Listening is an acquired skill, and we will work together this semester to become better listeners.

Class Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Lecture, demonstrations, critique, and discussions are a vital part of this course and cannot be made up. Missing two unexcused classes will negatively affect your grade. Missing three classes will result in the deduction of one full letter grade from your final grade. Missing more than 3 classes over the course of the semester will result a non-passing grade. Please reach out to the co-leaders if there are extenuating circumstances effecting your ability to attend class, and we will work with you to accommodate your needs.

Policy on Electronic Devices

We will be meeting virtually in Zoom sessions, except for the occasional socially distanced in-person meeting. We ask that all cameras and microphones remain on throughout the session (except during the break). This will allow us to interact with one another in as close an approximation to ‘the real thing’ as possible. If this presents a problem for you, please let us know, and we will make an accommodation.

Academic Resource Center

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) offers free services to all students during their undergraduate careers at Duke. Services include Learning Consultations, Peer Tutoring, Learning Communities, ADHD/LD Coaching, Outreach Workshops, GRE/MCAT Prep, Study Connect, and more. Because learning is a process unique to every individual, we work with each student to discover and develop their own academic strategy for success at Duke. Contact the ARC to schedule an appointment. Undergraduates in any year, studying any discipline can benefit! arc.duke.edu • theARC@duke.edu • 919-684-5917, 211 Academic Advising Center Building, East Campus – behind Marketplace.

Student Disability Access Office (SDAO).

We all learn differently, and we will do our best to make sure that there are multiple means of accessing and demonstrating knowledge. We welcome your input on things we can do to make the course materials, our lessons, and the classroom experience more inclusive. If there is an accommodation that could improve your experience in my class, please let us know, or contact SDAO at (919) 668-1267 to ensure that your accommodations can be implemented in a timely fashion. For accessibility software and other information, check out the Disability Management System site: <https://access.duke.edu>

Course Design:

AUGUST 20 – Introducing the Anthropocene Pt. 1

Assignment:

In advance of our first class, find an article in popular media (newspaper, magazine, blog etc.) that makes use of the concept of *the Anthropocene*. Pick an article that is related to something of particular interest to you. (For instance, perhaps you are a big [Grimes](#) fan? You might chose to read [this brief review](#) of her latest album “Miss Anthropocene” in *The Guardian*. Or perhaps you are fashion-obsessed? You might choose [this article on Anthropocene fashion aesthetics](#)). Read the article and come to class prepared to say a few words about what interested you in the article and (most importantly) how it made use of the *Anthropocene* construct. In other words, when the author used the term “the Anthropocene” what was it describing? The idea is to share a little bit about ourselves while thinking about how the term in the title of our Bass Connection is variously used.

Plan:

- Introductions (share on articles). Discuss semester schedule. Discuss group expectations and norms. Sign up discussion leaders for the six sessions.
- Break
- Introduction to the Anthropocene: Scientific Perspectives (Hillary)
- Introduction to the Anthropocene: Visual Perspectives (Raquel)
- Introduction to the Anthropocene: Sonic Perspectives (Jonathan)

Describe homework assignment: Assign alternate concepts for short concept presentations.

- Plasticene, Chthulucene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Anthro-not-seen, black Anthropocenes, against the Anthropocene, Manthropocene (feminist critiques/gendering the Anthropocene), Pyrocene, Econocene, Growthcene, Virocene

AUGUST 27 - Introducing the Anthropocene Pt. 2, Deep Sea (session leaders: Hillary)

Assignment Due:

- In groups of two, present a five-minute summary of the contrasting concept you chose at the end of the last class. What does this concept describe? What does it offer to our thinking about the *Anthropocene* framework? How does it contrast with the ways in which the *Anthropocene* concept is utilized?
- Read: David Wallace-Wells article “The Uninhabitable Earth”
 - <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/07/climate-change-earth-too-hot-for-humans.html>
 - <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43076/middle-passage>
- Watch:
 - <https://coastalcare.org/2014/05/exploring-deep-sea-volcanoes-off-the-coast-of-barbados-an-artists-perspective/>
 - <http://jojolenelene.net/triptych/>
- Listen:
 - <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/707/we-are-in-the-future>

Plan:

- Contrasting concept presentations
- Discussion: Why (or why not) the Anthropocene? *We've chosen this term to frame our work, what are its advantages, limits and problems?*
- Break
- Guests:
 - Cindy Van Dover, Duke Marine Lab
 - Phillip Turner, Seascapes Consultants

SEPTEMBER 3 – Art, Rivers and Activism in North Carolina
(physical or virtual fieldtrip to Paperhand Puppet Intervention studios in Saxapahaw, NC)
(session leaders: Chaya and Joyce)

Assignments Due:

- Watch “Watermark”
- Other Assignments TBA

Guests:

Donovan Zimmerman, Paperhand Puppet Intervention
 North Carolina Inclusive Disaster Network (tentative)
 Charley Lowry, Songwriter
 Emily Sutton, Haw River Assembly

SEPTEMBER 10 – Water and Environmental Justice
(session leaders: Jonathan and Raquel)

Assignments Due:

- Read “The Water Next Time,” Danielle Purifoy.
- Read “My Dungeon Shook: Letter to My Nephew on the Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation” from *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin.
- Other readings TBA (Multiple Threats Imperil freshwater biodiversity in the Anthropocene)

Guests:

Danielle Purifoy, UNC Department of Geography
 Betsy Albright, Professor of the Practice of Environmental Science and Policy Methods, Duke

SEPTEMBER 17 – Sea Level Rise
(session leaders: Kendall and TBD)

Assignments Due:

- Peruse Stanley Riggs multi-decade study “Drowning the North Carolina Coast”
 - <http://core.ecu.edu/geology/riggs/DROWNING%20The%20NC%20Coast.pdf>
- “Sea Level Rise: A Slow Tsunami on American Shores” by Orrin Pilkey (online resource Duke Library)
 - Ch. 1 “Flee the Sea”, Ch. 6 “At-Risk Coastal Environments- Is resilience futile?”, Ch. 7 “The environmental impact of surging sea- life at the edge”, Ch. 9 “Coastal Catastrophes- Cities on the brink”
- Excerpt of “The Sea Around Us” by Rachel Carson

Guests:

Pt. 1 (2:00 – 3:00):

Justin Cook, Journalist and Photographer

Stanley Riggs

Orrin Pilkey (tentative)

Pt. 2 (3:30-4:15):

Laura Moore & Jules Odenhal-James

**SEPTEMBER 24 – Coal Ash and NC Waterways
(session leaders: Ali and Kelly)**

Assignments Due:

- Sue Sturgis article TBA

Guests:

Pt. 1:

Avner Vangosh, Nicholas School (tentative)

Pt. 2:

Will Warasila, Photographer

Caroline Armijo, The Lillies Project

Sue Sturgis, Journalist at Facing South

Amy Adams, Appalachian Voices

Rachel Coyte, Nicholas School of the Environment

**OCTOBER 1 – Water Contamination and the Law
(session leaders: Kathleen and Sarah)**

Guests:

Pt. 1:

Lee Fergeson (tentative), Civil and Environmental Engineering

Pt. 2:

Ryke Longest, Duke Environmental Law and Policy Clinic

Michelle Nowlan, Duke Environmental Law and Policy Clinic

Megan Kimball, Southern Environmental Law Center

**OCTOBER 8 – Hearing the Anthropocene
(session leader: Mingyong)**

There will be no assignments due this week. Class will be designed to offer you a mid-semester break.

- Watch Documentary: “Sonic Sea”

OCTOBER 15 - River Listening
(session leaders: Madison and Jonathan)

Assignments Due:

Read: "River Listening" by Leah Barclay

Listen: "A Sound Map of the Housatonic River", "A Sound Map of the Hudson River", "A Sound Map of the Danube" by Annea Lockwood

Guest: Annea Lockwood, Composer

OCTOBER 22 – Environmental Art Curation
(session leaders: Ayesham and Kate)

Assignments TBA

Plan:

*Book Presentations Block 1**

Introduce Art Proposal Concept

Marshall Price, Nasher Museum

Caitlin Kelly, Powerplant Gallery

Pinar Yoldas (tentative)

OCTOBER 29 - Environmental Film
(session leaders: Jessica and Mila)

Assignments Due:

- Watch "Beasts of the Southern Wild"
- Readings TBA

*Book Presentations Block 2**

Guests

Sasha Wortzel, Filmmaker

Casey Williams, Duke Literature PhD Candidate

NOVEMBER 5 – Art Proposals

Assignments Due:

- Come prepared to pitch your art proposal

*Book Presentations Block 3**

Plan

- Present sketch of Art Proposal for critique

- Tentative workshop in Video or Sound

NOVEMBER 12 – Research-Creation: Art at the End of the World

Assignment:

- Read excerpt from *How to To Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* by Natalie Loveless

Plan:

- Watch and discuss Natalie Loveless' lecture:
 - <https://vimeo.com/383803590>
 - Each team member takes notes as we move through lecture, at the end each student poses one question related to what they found most important about her perspective.
- Wrap up discussion on the semester: Reflecting, looking forward...

EXAM PERIOD: Discuss Art Proposals, Plan for the Spring