



COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Literature and the Anthropocene/Literatūra ir Antropocenas	

Lecturer(s)	Department(s) where the course unit (module) is delivered
Coordinator: Dr. Rūta Šlapkauskaitė	Department of English Philology, Faculty of Philology

Study cycle	Type of the course unit (module)
MA	Compulsory

Mode of delivery	The period when the course unit (module) is delivered	Language(s) of instruction
Seminars	Autumn	English

Requirements for students	
Prerequisites: A very good command of English	Additional requirements (if any): The students should be competent in modern critical theory and the English literary tradition.

Course (module) volume in credits	Total student workload	Contact hours	Self-study hours
10	300	64	236

Purpose of the course unit (module): programme competences to be developed
<p>This reading-intensive course is organised around the nature/culture dialectic in literary discourse as explored through the intellectual encounters between environmental humanities and literary history. Taking its premise from the lived experience of the current environmental emergency, on the one hand, and the intellectual urgency to reflect upon it, on the other, the course aims to call the students' attention to the complexity of literary representations of the environment and the material and affective bonds which enmesh humans and nonhumans in a shared world of material-semiotic relations. To that effect, though grounded primarily in literary studies, this course asks its students to think as global ecological citizens – across national and disciplinary boundaries – so as to open up new ways of interpreting both the current environmental emergency and its discourses, whether poetic or political.</p> <p>The students should develop the following generic competences (as per the aims of the English Studies programme):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ability to find, analyse, synthesise and evaluate data needed for studies, professional, cultural, and creative activities; integrate knowledge, apply the acquired knowledge in practice, recognise problems and propose possible solutions; 2. ability to generate ideas and knowledge, independently find appropriate forms of expressing them, seek new knowledge and skills and apply them in solving tasks in a new environment and in the implementation of innovations. 3. ability to identify differences between one's own and others' cultural identities and attitudes, explore others' ideas despite cultural differences, express one's ideas in ways that are understandable and acceptable to different people; 4. ability to understand and value the common public interest, work in a team to achieve a common goal, cooperate with people of various cultures, take responsibility for the quality of one's own and the team's activities and its improvement. 5. ability to set realistic goals, identify all the steps and effective strategies needed to fulfil such goals within the time available; meet deadlines, make necessary decisions, and flexibly adapt to the circumstances; 6. ability to take initiative and carry out one's activities, rationally assess the strengths and weaknesses of one's work, reflect and be responsible for one's decisions and actions, be aware of the impact of one's activities and their outcomes on society and the environment.

Learning outcomes of the course unit (module)	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
<p>Subject-specific competences (as per the aims of the English Studies programme):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ability to comprehend literary and cultural studies as independent yet interconnected disciplines and define their objects of inquiry; become acquainted with literary and cultural theories, their historical development and the socio-cultural factors involved in that process; be able to define and use appropriate terminology within the fields of literary and cultural studies; 2. comprehension of the intricacies of the anglophone literary canons and cultures as highly complex phenomena; be able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the development of anglophone literature and the factors involved in that process; 3. ability to analyse and evaluate anglophone literary and cultural texts of various genres in relation to their historical, social, and other contexts; 4. ability to independently formulate a relevant research question in linguistics, literature, culture or interdisciplinary studies and design a research study; 5. ability to critically evaluate the application of research methods and approaches and selection of the theoretical framework(s), methodology and empirical material; 6. ability to conduct a research study by adopting innovative methods of data collection and processing, interpret findings of the study, draw conclusions and evaluate the results of the research within the context of other studies; 7. ability to present the results of research in writing and orally to a variety of audiences and demonstrate the ability to provide logical arguments in discussions. 	<p>The course follows the hybrid logic of an interactive lecture and seminar. The methodological approaches are problem-oriented; historical-cultural; ludic and analytical.</p>	<p>Formative assessment Cumulative grade</p> <p>The final grade will consist of two written midterm assignments (30% + 40%) and an oral presentation (30%).</p>

Content: breakdown of the topics	Contact hours						Self-study work: time and assignments		
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Exercises	Laboratory work	Internship/work placement	Contact hours	Self-study hours	Assignments
<p><i>Anthropocene</i> and its Others: climate change, global warming, environmental emergency. Scale and agency: the dialectic of <i>global/planetary, history/deep time, natural contract/social contract</i>. Dipesh Chakrabarty's four theses.</p>			8				8		<p>The full version of the course syllabus will be made available on Moodle.</p> <p>Theoretical framing:</p> <p>Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses" (pp. 197-222).</p> <p>Heather Anne Swanson, "The Banality of the Anthropocene" (online blog).</p> <p>Literary texts:</p>

								Samples of short stories and poetry.
What is nature? The American frontier and the aesthetics of the sublime. "Ecology without culture". Environmental imaginaries and the enclosures of cultural identity.			6				5	<p>The full version of the course syllabus will be made available on Moodle.</p> <p>Theoretical framing:</p> <p>William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (pp. 1-24).</p> <p>Literary texts:</p> <p>Samples of short stories and poetry.</p>
What is the Anthropocene subject? Identity constructions, scientific practices, ethical attitudes. Interpretation as a practice of ecological entanglement.			6				6	<p>The full version of the course syllabus will be made available on Moodle.</p> <p>Theoretical framing:</p> <p>Stacy Alaimo, <i>Bodily Natures</i> (pp. 1-22).</p> <p>Literary texts:</p> <p>Samples of short stories and poetry.</p>
<i>Anthropocene</i> and the social formation. Fossil capitalism, (post)industrial modernity, and the economy of extraction. <i>Anthropocene</i> as a scene of material inscription: colonialism, geology, and race.			6				5	<p>The full version of the course syllabus will be made available on Moodle.</p> <p>Theoretical framing:</p> <p>Kathryn Yusoff, <i>A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None</i> (pp. 1-22).</p>
<p>Students' presentations.</p> <p>Students are expected to read both novels and to make an oral presentation on one of them.</p> <p>If the student fails to deliver the presentation on time, this task will be substituted by a written assignment.</p>			10				10	<p>Both novels will be made available on Moodle.</p> <p>Literary texts:</p> <p>Richard Powers, <i>Bewilderment</i>.</p> <p>Ursula Le Guin, <i>The Word for World is Forest</i>.</p>

<i>Anthropocene</i> and the pressures on the cultural imaginary. Framing ecological emergency: tragedy, comedy, SF, history.			8				6		The full version of the course syllabus will be made available on Moodle. Theoretical framing: Matt Bell, “Climate Fictions: Future-Making Technologies” (pp. 100-110) Film screening and discussion: <i>Extinction</i> (2020).
Aesthetic frames of the Anthropocene: the (ecological) <i>sublime</i> , the <i>fantastic</i> , the (new) <i>weird</i> . Speculative realism and environmental disaster. Narrating irreverence: environmental degradation and the affordances of comic form. Satire and entropy. Genre fiction and the critique of human exceptionalism.			10				8		Literary texts: Samples of short stories and poetry.
Animal figures and critical discourse. The ethics of speciesism vs. the ethics of kinship. Anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism.			10				8		The full version of the course syllabus will be made available on Moodle. Theoretical framing: Soper, Kate, “The Beast in Literature: Some Initial Thoughts.” (pp. 303-309). Literary texts: Samples of short stories and poetry.
Total			64				64	236	

Assessment strategy	Weight, %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
A cumulative grade consisting of the grades for three midterm assignments.	30	1 st midterm (30% of the final grade) – October	Consistent participation in seminar discussions, appropriate use of metalanguage, argumentative, rigorous critical thinking, and error-free academic English.
	30	Presentation (30 % of the final grade) – November	The final, cumulative grade consists of the grades for two written assignments and the oral presentation delivered in class.
	40	2 nd midterm (40% of the final grade) – December	If the student fails to deliver the presentation on time, this task will be substituted by a written assignment.
Attendance of seminars is compulsory and expected. Students who miss more than 30% of the classes may not be admitted to the exam. Should there be questions related to the material or the final exam, the students have to tackle			Each midterm assignment will consist of a set of closed and open-ended written tasks to be carried out in class. <i>10- Excellent. All the tasks have been carried out in such a way that the answers show the student's academic excellence and an astute understanding of the main issues under discussion. Apt use of the necessary critical and theoretical terms. Full understanding of the relation between form and content. Solid grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. Excellent,</i>

<p>these issues before the exam date.</p> <p>The course material will be available for download at: www.emokymai.vu.lt</p> <p>N.B.</p> <p>The course instructor reserves the right to turn class assignments into home assignments in case of a conference, lecture, library visit, poor performance on the students' part or any other unforeseen circumstances.</p> <p>The contents of the course will not be measured only by the contents of the seminars. It is the responsibility of the students to "fill in the gaps" by studying the theoretical material provided in the reading list. Needless to say, any <u>reputable</u> source of theory not mentioned in the course description may be useful as well. The students should be well advised to rely on English-language sources and NOT use Internet sources (e.g. blogs, Shmoop, Wikipedia, Cliff Notes, etc.) as intellectually reliable sources. The use of AI tools in written assignments and oral presentations is not allowed.</p> <p>Should any question arise as to the authenticity of the student's work, he or she may be asked to account for it by means of a <i>viva voce</i> defence.</p>		<p><i>almost effortless, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Independent and creative thinking. Fluent and error-free academic English.</i></p> <p>9- Very good. <i>The tasks have been very well carried out but lack the edge of excellence. Mostly apt use of the necessary critical and theoretical terms. A very good understanding of the relation between form and content. A reliable grasp of the discursive contingencies and most of their contradictions. A consistent, though not excellent, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Independent, though not always creative, thinking. Fluent and error-free academic English.</i></p> <p>8 – Good. <i>The tasks have been well carried out, but without razor-sharp intelligence or creativity. Mostly apt use of the necessary critical and theoretical terms. A good, though predictable, understanding of the relation between form and content. A limited grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. An inconsistent, and varying in degree of success, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Coherent and logical thinking derived from learned sources. Mostly fluent and error-free academic English.</i></p> <p>7 – Average. <i>The tasks have been carried out selectively and without much cognitive labour. A tendency towards inept use of critical and theoretical terms. A predictable and limited understanding of the relation between form and content. An amateurish grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. An inconsistent, mostly inadequate, ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Struggle with logic and coherence of thought, as made manifest in reproduction of the ideas of others. Some instances of relying on Internet sources may be detected. Lack of fluency and correct grammar in the use of academic English.</i></p> <p>6 – Satisfactory. <i>The tasks have been carried out selectively and with little cognitive labour. Inept use of critical and theoretical terms. An inconsistent, and largely inadequate, understanding of the relation between form and content. A weak and amateurish grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. Lack of ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Struggle with logic and coherence of thought, as made manifest in reproduction (not always successful) of the ideas of others. Multiple instances of relying on Internet sources may be detected. Lack of fluency and correct grammar in the use of academic English.</i></p> <p>5 – Poor. <i>The tasks have been carried out selectively and poorly. Irresponsible and/or incompetent use of critical and theoretical terms. Lack of understanding of the relation between form and content. A poor grasp of the discursive contingencies and their contradictions. Lack of ability to conceptualise and substantiate one's reasoning. Struggle with logic and coherence of thought, as made manifest in poor reproduction of the ideas of others. Prevalent instances of relying on Internet sources. Poor use of academic English.</i></p> <p>4-0 – Fail. <i>None of the tasks has been adequately carried out to show the student's intellectual competences developed in the course.</i></p> <p>The oral presentation on the selected novel (please see the two provided options) is up to 20 minutes long. It is worth 30% of the final grade. The formal structure of the oral presentation should meet the following scheme: Title, Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Analysis, Conclusions, List of References.</p> <p><u>N.B. Choice of Topic</u> (see the Oral presentation requirements above). Suggest an interesting theme or research question that is related to one of the two novels indicated in this syllabus. Discuss this topic with your class instructor before you present it for the oral presentation seminar. The instructor may be able to give you some more information on useful references. It is advisable to think about a suitable topic before the presentation, i.e. before the end of the seminar period, to be able to speak to your instructor about your ideas. Although it is possible to see your instructor during the seminar-free time of the semester, it is not guaranteed that the office hours will always be held during this time.</p> <p>Students are not allowed to use AI tools for written and oral tasks in the course.</p> <p>N.B. In case of suspicion of plagiarism or the use of AI the student will be asked to account for his or her research orally in the department of English Philology.</p>
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Academic integrity

In accordance with the university regulations (see article 53.2 of Study Regulations of Vilnius University (https://www.vu.lt/site_files/Studiju_nuostatai_2018_EN.pdf), any student who commits an act of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism or other form of cheating) will receive a failing grade on the work in which the dishonesty occurred. In addition, any act of academic dishonesty will result in the failure of the whole course and the student who has committed the act may be subject to the expulsion from the University.

Course policy regarding the use of electronic devices in class

The usage of electronic devices (e.g. laptops, tablets, cell phones, smartphones, e-readers, music players, etc.) during class is only allowed for study and research purposes, when it is required for in-class assignments (assigned by the course instructor), for contacting group members (when such need arises), or in cases of emergency. Mobile phones should be silenced and put away during the entire seminar, unless they are used for above-mentioned learning purposes and prior permission to use them from the course instructor is granted. If a student has an emergency situation which requires to keep his/her phone on, he/she must inform the course instructor beforehand. Taking photos, videos and making sound recordings in class are forbidden, unless instructed otherwise by the professor or unless students provide documents which outline the requirements for necessary accommodations of the use of electronic devices due to disability or other diagnosed health issues.

Author	Year of publication	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing place and house or web link
Compulsory reading				
Chakrabarty, Dipesh.	2009	“The Climate of History: Four Theses”	<i>Critical Inquiry</i> , 35/2.	
Haraway, Donna.	2008	<i>When Species Meet.</i>		London and Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
Merchant, Carolyn.	2020	<i>The Anthropocene and the Humanities.</i>		New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
Regan, Tom.	1980	“Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights”.	Philosophy & Public Affairs, Vol. 9, No. 4.	
Singer, Peter.	1980	“Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism”	Philosophy & Public Affairs, Vol. 9, No. 4.	
Yusoff, Kathryn.	2018	<i>A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None.</i>		Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
The full list of compulsory texts will be available on Moodle.				
Optional reading				
Garrard, Greg.	2004	<i>Ecocriticism.</i>		London and New York: Routledge.
Glotfelty, Cheryl and Fromm, Harold (eds).	1995	<i>The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology.</i>		Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press.
Newell, Jonathan.	2020	<i>A Century of Weird Fiction 1832-1937.</i>		Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

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