**THEA 190 Freshman Seminar: Theatre+Ecology**

**(Cross-listed with Environmental Science)**

**Lydia Fort**

**Theater Studies | Emory University**

**August 6, 2018**

**Statement:**

Theatre+Ecology (eco-theatre ) is a new interdisciplinary course and will be offered as a Freshman Seminar geared toward incoming students interested in Environmental Science and/or Theater Studies.

When I began envisioning this class I knew two things I wanted to do the course:

1. To read plays, specifically ecodramas, which are mostly focused on bringing awareness to a variety of issues related to the ecological crises.
2. For students to create performance piece related to an ecological issue they are passionate about that incite conversations of change

Each environmental issue that the course covers is centered on a play that serves as an anchor for readings and discussion. I assembled a diverse mix of plays to represent various voices and cultural perspectives of the environmental issues to be examined in class.

Finding supporting course material became a daunting task—there are a plethora of books and articles to choose among. While Greg Garrad’s seminal work, *Ecocriticism,* seems the perfect place to start, it is grounded in literature and theatre is about ‘liveness’ and therefore requires a different lens. This is where Una Chaudhuri’s theory on theatre’s humancentric and conflict as central to drama; and Theresa May’s work on ecodramaturgy become essential. Together they problematize theatre’s ability to be eco-centric and see it as fundamentally rooted in the Environment. What an exciting paradox to debate over the course of course of a semester! I am eager to see where we land (or if we even do).

Participating in the Piedmont Project opened up new directions for me to explore and broader goals for the course. Because sustainability was an important part of the Piedmont Project workshop, I realized that the course needed to address sustainability issues and practices in the theatre. Thus, a third goal for the course emerged: For students to be able to identify/execute /engage in sustainable theatre practices.

One of the major questions I have is, how much will students know about climate change and sustainability? Assuming they will know a lot, and no one wants to preach to the choir, I began to consider what can I bring that is unique? What can this class offer that empowers them to take action in some new way? One thing I could bring is exposure to different worldviews, ways of being and knowing than the dominant Western narrative. Additionally, I discovered a former Piedmont Project participant whose work in psychology and behavior change in relation to sustainability an interesting place to explore—possibly even being the site of empowerment.

**THEATRE+ECOLOGY**

**THEA 190**

**Fall 2018**

**Tue/Thu 11:30am – 12:45pm**

**Rich Memorial Building, Rm 201**

**Emory University**

**Instructor:** Lydia Fort

**Office:** Rich Memorial Building, room 222

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 4:00-5:00pm and Wednesday 3:30-4:30pm or by appointment

**Email:** lydia.fort@emory.edu (please allow 24-48hrs for a response)

**Teaching Assistant:** Adam Friedman

**Course Description:**

This course is a survey of the burgeoning field of theatre-making that is centered on our ecological crises. Through the critical reading of plays from around the world, students will examine how drama is being used to bring awareness to environmental issues including extinction, climate change, environmental justice and sustainability. Students will be introduced to organizations such as the international network Artists and Climate Change, and their Climate Change Theatre Action; and the Earth Matters On Stage (EMOS) New Play Festival and Symposium, that are leading the charge, uniting artists, educators and scientists to bring awareness to these issues through theatre. Also, theatre companies like Superhero Clubhouse, whose new plays teach eco-critical literacy to students. Additionally, we will look at eco-activist performance; theatre practitioners whose works challenges audiences to move from ego-centrism to eco-centrism; Green Theatre; and organizations and resources that promote sustainability in theatrical production practices. Students will consider how theatre artists can, and do, facilitate the normalization of eco-involvement in their communities. The course culminates in students creating either a short play that addresses an environmental issue or the conception of an event that use eco-theater.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to

* Explain a variety of issues in our current ecological crises
* Examine dramatic texts using an ecodramaturgical framework
* Identify sustainability practices used by theatre-makers worldwide
* Create performance pieces that engage ecological issues using both experimental and traditional playwriting practices
* Interpret an individual’s resistance to climate science and behavioral change
* Conduct a “green theatre” assessment of a theatrical production

**Required Texts:**  *(all plays are available at the bookstore unless otherwise noted below)*

*Sila* by Chantal Bilodeau

*A Cool Dip in the Barren Saharan Crick* by Kia Corthron

*Kill Climate Deniers* by David Finnigan**†**

*Tooth and Claw* by Michael Hollinger

*Odin’s Horse* by Robert Koon**\***

*Salmon is Everything* by Theresa May

*Heroes and Saints* by Cherríe Moraga

*The Contingency Plan* by Steve Waters**\***

**\*** *will be provided on course Canvas site*

**†** *this title can be purchased online as a pdf download at:* <http://www.killclimatedeniers.com/product/kill-climate-deniers-playscript/>

There is onecopy of all of the plays (accept *Odin’s Horse*)on reserve in the library. Please note that plays on reserve can only be taken out for 3 hours at a time.

This course will also use *Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation* Tom Theis and Jonathan Tomkin. This textbook is an Open Educational Resource (OER) which makes it free for students to use. Links to the required chapters of the text are posted in Canvas.

Additional readings will be assigned and made available on Canvas.

**Recommended Texts:** (on reserve at Woodruff Library)

*Where is the Hope? An Anthology of Short Climate Change Plays,* edited by Chantal Bilodeau

*A Practical Guide to Greener Theatre: Introduce Sustainability Into Your Productions* by Ellen E. Jones with Jessica Pribble (online resource available through Emory Library website)

*To Life! Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* by Linda Weintraub

**Canvas**

This course utilizes Canvas, Emory's Learning Management System (LMS) and is a major component of this class. Much of the materials for the class will be on Canvas, so being familiar with how to use it is a requirement for this course. For help with using Canvas go the Teaching and Learning Technologies’ resource website: <http://canvas-support.emory.edu/canvas-resources/for-students.html>

This course’s Canvas website has the syllabus, readings and assignments. Additionally, you will find the due dates for assignments on your Canvas calendar. (In order to populate your calendar with class due dates, be sure to select this course under the “Calendars” list located on the right side of the Calendars page in Canvas.)

*Note:* While you can email me through Canvas, it is preferred that you send emails through your Emory Outlook email account.

**Course Requirements:**

**Participation/Preparation/Homework:** Students should demonstrate good work ethics—attendance, punctuality, preparedness, completing assignments on time, contributing to class discussions, being supportive of peers, etc.

**Response Papers:** Students are required to write 2-page critical response papers on seven of the eight plays that are required reading. These papers are to focus examining the plays through and ecodramatugical lens. Specific questions will be asked of each play and will be given on each play’s assignment page in Canvas.

**Team Teaching Presentation:** Details will be discussed in class.

**Final Project:** For the final, students have a choice of either (1) writing a 10-min play (which is approx. 10 pages in playwriting format) that addresses ecological issue; or (2) creating a poster presentation for an event that utilizes eco-performance to promote the goals of the event.

**\*\* All written assignments** must be submitted in the following format: typed, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, 12-point size, stapled, proofread and handed (either through Canvas or in person) in at the beginning of class on the date the assignment is due. Points will be deducted if you do not use the required format. Late papers will be marked down based on the number of days overdue.

**Grading:**

Participation/Preparation/Homework 75 points

Response Papers 315 points (7 papers x 45 points each)

Team Presentation 45 points

Final Project 65 points

*Total 500 points*

**Final Letter Grade**

A  (95%+)  475 +  
A-  (92%+)  460 - 474  
B+  (88%+)  440 - 459  
B  (85%+)  425 - 439  
B-  (82%+)  410 - 424  
C+  (78%+)  390 - 409  
C  (75%+)  375 - 389  
C-  (72%+)  360 - 374  
D+  (68%+)  340 – 359  
D  (65%+)  325 - 339  
D-  (62%+)  310 - 324  
F  (< 62%)  < 310

**Class Policies:**

* Attendance is mandatory and an absolute requirement for success in this course.   
  Students missing three (3) class sessions will have 30 points deducted from their final grade; missing four (4) class sessions: 60 points deducted from final grade; and students  
  missing five (5) class sessions: will have to drop the class, be administratively withdrawn, or fail.
* Repeated lateness will be considered an absence. Arrival to class ten (10) minutes after the start of the class is considered lateness. Habitually arriving late to class will result in points being deducted from the final grade—the instructor determines the number of points deducted. Leaving class early is equal being late and therefore, subject to the same rules.
* If any of our class meetings conflict with a student’s religious events, please let the instructor know so that arrangements can be made.

**Participation in Class Discussions**

Participating in discussions is an important part of this course—it counts towards your final grade. Keep in mind the *quality* of your contributions in discussions is far more valuable than the *quantity* (or how often you speak). What constitutes quality? The contribution should be relevant and on topic; offer a different perspective; builds on previous comments given by your peers; and helps to advance the conversation.

Of course this can be a daunting task if you are an introvert. In fact, I am one too. With practice however, it has become easier. If this is something you would like to work on, please let me know privately—I am happy to help.

**Explicit Content**

Some of the materials for this course involve the use of explicit language, including descriptions and examples of sexual situations, violent and abusive behaviors. Such content may trigger reminders of experiences you or friends and family members may have gone through.

If you need support and/or would like to talk to someone about questions or concerns relating to power-based personal violence, please contact Emory University's Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) website: <http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/> or call the Emory HelpLine: A confidential, peer-staffed telephone hotline (available 8:30 PM-1 AM, 7 days per week during the academic year): (404) 727-4357.

**Zero-Waste-Class**

In the effort support Emory’s “getting to zero” (in regards to diverting 95% landfill waste) and my own personal commitment to sustainability, I will be reducing the amount of paper used in this course. To do this, I:

1. request that all written assignments be submitted online through Canvas
2. assignments will likewise be graded electronically
3. will post links and pdfs of course documents and readings on the course site (If you require paper copies due to ADA reasons, please see me.)
4. support note-taking on computers and other electronic devices, however recording class sessions either through audio or video is prohibited
5. welcome your thoughts and suggestions on how to make this course more sustainable

To learn more about the Emory Waste Policy, visit http://sustainability.emory.edu/programs/zero-landfill-waste/.

**Academic Integrity:**

All students are expected to act with civility, personal integrity, respect other students’ dignity, rights and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for self and others and a civil community.

Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another persons’ work as one’s own, using Internet sources without citation, tampering with the work of another student, facilitating other students’ acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

Sanctions for academic dishonesty may range, depending on the severity of the offense from an “F” grade on an assignment or test to an “F” in the course. Severe cases and/or repeat offenses of may also result in more severe disciplinary actions up to and including suspension or expulsion. (1)

**Diversity Statement:**

Every student in this class will be honored and respected as an individual with distinct experiences and backgrounds. Students will be treated fairly regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, socio-economic status, age, or national identity. Issues of diversity will be a part of class discussion, assigned material, and projects. The diversity that students bring to this class is a strength, benefit and viewed as a resource for the class as a whole. The instructor will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have any concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with the course instructor. (2)

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

Emory University makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) in the Administration Building of their disability related needs.

Any student eligible for academic accommodations based on a disability should bring the formal accommodation communication (letter or email) to the attention of the instructor. Note that accommodations are NOT granted retroactively. Please arrange a meeting with your instructor at the start of the semester or as soon as the accommodation plan has been finalized.

See http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/students/index.html for documentation guidelines.

To make an appointment with an OAS staff member or for more information, call 404-727-9877.

### Mental Health and Stress Management:

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Emory University services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus at Emory University's Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) website: <http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/> (3)

(1) Adapted from Miramar College Office of Student Affairs < www.sdmiramar.edu/webfm\_send/128>

(2) Adapted from Emerson Academic Affairs <http://www.emerson.edu/academic-affairs/faculty-resources/syllabi-guidelines>

(3) Adapted from University of Minneapolis Center For Educational Innovation

<https://cei.umn.edu/support-services/tutorials/u-m-syllabus-requirements-policy-statements/mental-health-and-stress>

***The syllabus and course schedule are subject to change***

**Class Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Day/Date** | **Topic** | **Assignment Due** |
| **Thu 8/30** | **Introduction & Course Overview** |  |
| **Tue 9/4** | **Ecology**  Readings in Canvas |  |
| **Thu 9/6** | **Ecology—Can the Arts Change Behavior?**  Guest: Alice Reznickova, Director of Sustainability, Ripon College  Read: “The Principles of Climate Change Communication in Brief”  Watch: “Getting Green Right” by Christina Page at TEDxFulbright |  |
| **Tue 9/11** | **Ecodramaturgy**  Watch: *This Changes Everything* |  |
| **Thu 9/13** | **Trees**  Read: “The Cutter” by William Dietrich and “Wall Street Sleaze: How the Hostile Takeover of Pacific Lumber Led to the Clear-Cutting of Coastal Redwoods” by Robert K. Anderberg in *Environment: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*  Listen: Radiolab: “From Tree to Shining Tree” |  |
| **\*Sun 9/16**  **10am – 1pm** | **Field Trip: Forest Walk**  Location: TBA |  |
| ***9/17-21*** | ***Theatre in the Age of Climate Change blog series on HowlRound*** |  |
| **Tue 9/18** | **Trees**  Read: *Odin’s Horse* by Robert Koon | Response Paper |
| **Thu 9/20** | **Environmental Ethics**  Readings in Canvas |  |
| **Tue 9/25** | **Environmental Ethics**  Read: *The Contingency Plan* by Steve Waters | Response Paper |
| **Thu 9/27** | **Film Screening—*Trashed***  *\*Class will meet in the screening room of the Music and Media Library located on the 4th floor, of the Woodruff Library* |  |
| **Tue 10/2** | **Water**  Read: *A Cool Dip in the Barren Saharan Crick* by Kia Corthron | Response Paper |
| **Thu 10/4** | **Water—Field Trip: Emory Water Hub**  *\*Class will meet at 700 Peavine Creek Drive*  Activities in Canvas  Optional reading: *Sustainability ­* Sections 5.1 Physical Resources: Water, Pollution, and Minerals and 5.2 Water Cycle and Fresh Water Supply |  |
| **Tue 10/9** | **NO CLASS–Fall Break** |  |
| **Thu 10/11** | **Extinction**  Read: *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* by Elizabeth Kolbert;  and in *Sustainability ­* Section6.3 Biodiversity, Species Loss, and Ecosystem Function  Listen: RadioLab “Galapagos”  Watch: TedTalk: “Dreams from Endangered Cultures” by Wade Davis |  |
| **Tue 10/16** | **Extinction**  Read: *Tooth and Claw* by Michael Hollinger | Response Paper |
| **Thu 10/18** | **Environmental Justice**  Read: “Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement” by Robert Bullard in *Ecology,* edited by Carolyn Merchant  "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice" by Giovanna Di Chiro in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, editor |  |
| **Tue 10/23** | **Environmental Justice**  Read: *Heroes and Saints* by Cherríe Moraga | Response Paper |
| **Thu 10/25** | **Playwriting** |  |
| **Tue 10/30** | **Playwriting** | 3-min plays |
| **Thu 11/1** | **Climate Change**  Read: *Sustainability ­* Sections 5.1 Climate and Global Change, and  5.2 Climate Processes; External and Internal Controls  Selected plays from *Where is the Hope? An Anthology of Short Climate Change Plays,* edited by Chantal Bilodeau |  |
| **\*Mon 11/5**  **6:00-7:30pm** | **Event: Theatre and the Environment: Representations of Climate Change on Stage**  Main Speaker: Chantal Bilodeau  Location: Schwartz Theatre Lab |  |
| **Tue 11/6** | **Climate Change**  Read: *Sila* by Chantal Bilodeau | Response Paper |
| **Thu 11/8** | **InterPlay Workshop with Ruth Schowalter** |  |
| **Tue 11/13** | Community-Based Theatre  Read: "Nature Moves Center Stage: Eco-centricism in Community Theatre" by Paul Brown and Xanthe-Rose Crittenden |  |
| **Thu 11/15** | **Community-Based Theatre**  Read: *Salmon is Everything* by Theresa May | Response Paper |
| **Tue 11/20** | **Climate Deniers**  Group assigned readings from *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* by Mike Hulme | Team Presentation |
| **Thu 11/22** | **NO CLASS–Thanksgiving** |  |
| **Tue 11/27** | **Climate Deniers**  Read: *Kill Climate Deniers* by David Finnigan | Response Paper |
| **Thu 11/29** | **Eco-Activist Performance**  Read: "The Ecological Imperative: Making Art as if the World Mattered" by Suzi Gablik |  |
| **Tue 12/4** | **Sustainability— efforts in the *field* of theatre/performance**  Guest: Ian Garrett, Co-Founder & Co-Director, CSPA  Read: *A Practical Guide to Greener Theatre (pp. 1-16)* |  |
| **Thu 12/6** | **Sustainability— practicesused by *theatremakers***  Guest: Malina Rodriguez, Asst. Technical Director, Theater Emory  Read: *A Practical Guide to Greener Theatre (pp. 17-34)* |  |
| **Tue 12/11** | **Sustainability—focused theatre *companies***  Guest: Lani Fu, Co-Director, Superhero Clubhouse  Read: “On Eco Theatre” by Jeremy Pickard; and “The Art; and “Science of Big Green Theatre's Eco-Plays” by Chantal Bilodeau |  |
| **EXAM DAY**  **Wed 12/19**  **3-5:30pm** |  | **Final Project** |