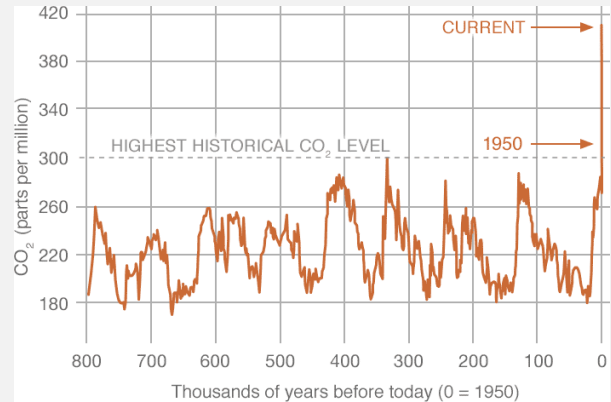


**ENG388W: Topics in Lit. & Environment**  
**Spring 2023**  
**Tu/Th 2:30-3:45pm**  
**Classroom tba**

**Dr. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma (Dr. S)**  
**Email: [nathan.e.suhr-sytsma@emory.edu](mailto:nathan.e.suhr-sytsma@emory.edu)**  
**Office ph: 404-727-6512**  
**Office: Callaway Center N302D**  
**Office hours: tba**



<https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/carbon-dioxide/>

## Topic: Planetary Futures

How do writers represent our planet’s present climate collapse and possible futures? In what ways does science fiction address ecological and sociopolitical questions? This course will wrestle with the challenges of imagining both the “slow violence” of environmental catastrophe and alternatives to it. We will explore concepts of the Anthropocene, utopia, environmental justice, and Afrofuturism through novels, essays, graphic narrative, short stories, and film. As this will be a Continuing Writing course, there will be four writing assignments, in addition to informal writing on a course blog, but no exams.

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## COURSE OUTCOMES

You will successfully complete this course by  
–Developing familiarity with diverse approaches to representing environments in literature.

- Discussing the aesthetics, concepts, and themes of texts, as well as their social contexts.
- Demonstrating proficient close reading, also known as literary analysis.
- Engaging with reputable scholarship in literary/cultural studies and/or environmental humanities.
- Crafting an essay-length argument in dialogue with both primary and secondary sources.
- Incorporating revision, as distinct from editing, into the writing process.
- Reflecting on your growth as a reader, thinker, writer, and member of society.

## REQUIRED TEXTS



- Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* ISBN: 978-0061054884
- Philippe Squarzoni, *Climate Changed: A Personal Journey Through the Science* ISBN: 978-1419712555
- Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future* ISBN: 978-0316300148
- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* ISBN: 978-0446675505
- Readings with a URL provided can be found online, while those marked with (C) will be posted to Canvas via Library Course Reserves.

You may either purchase books or use a library copy, as long as you find *exactly the same edition* (one with the same ISBN number). If not purchasing from the Emory Bookstore, consider supporting a local independent bookstore, which you can now do even if shopping online via <https://bookshop.org/>. If the cost of textbooks presents a serious hardship for you, contact Student Case Management and Intervention Services at 404-727-4193 or [adrienne.bryant@emory.edu](mailto:adrienne.bryant@emory.edu) to learn about possible sources of support.

### NOTE ON TRAUMATIC CONTENT

Some of our reading for this course will include graphic representations of traumatic situations, including racism, sexism, rape, murder, and other forms of violence. This material may be triggering for you and/or your peers. I will strive to treat this material with sensitivity. I ask you to be sensitive to others' needs and your own. Counseling and Psychological Services (details below) offers additional sources of support. Please let me know if you would like more specific information about what to expect.

## EXPECTATIONS

## ACADEMIC HONESTY AND HONOR CODE

I expect you to be honest in all of your academic work. You are responsible for reviewing and understanding the [Honor Code](#), including the definitions of paraphrasing and plagiarism. If you are unsure about something or having difficulties with a due date, please communicate with me!

## DEVICE USE

You may think that you are an excellent multi-tasker, but neuroscience research suggests that the act of multitasking [literally drains your brain's energy reserves](#) and increases stress. Research also suggests that writing notes by hand is best for comprehension. So as not to degrade your attention, turn off notifications for the duration of our class. Please use your device(s) during class only for accessing course readings and resources or for finding outside materials pertinent to our activities.

## EMAIL

I will communicate important course business by email. Please check your Emory email account at least once every 24 hours. If you email me, I will aim to respond within 24 hours, except for Sundays and holidays. You can email to ask a brief question, make an appointment, or let me know that you'll be absent from class. While I typically do not discuss grades or complex questions about writing over email, I will be happy to meet with you during office hours or another arranged time.

When you contact professors by email, I recommend formatting the message in a professional manner, using the following five components: (1) an appropriate subject line that describes the nature of the email, (2) a greeting that includes the name of the addressee (3) the body of your message written in complete sentences, (4) a closing (e.g., “Best regards,” or “Sincerely,” are appropriate ways to close a professional email message), and (5) your name. A greeting could range in formality, for example, from “Dear Professor Suhr-Sytsma” to “Hi Dr. S,” and the latter is perfectly fine with me. However, beginning an email without an addressee’s name (“Hey!”) is often regarded as unprofessional. Short follow-up messages in a thread may omit the greeting.

## RECORDINGS

This class meets in person, it may become necessary to meet by Zoom and/or record course materials. Lectures and other classroom presentations presented through video conferencing and other materials posted on Canvas are for the sole purpose of educating the students enrolled in the course. The release of such information (including but not limited to directly sharing, screen capturing, or recording content) is strictly prohibited, unless the instructor states otherwise. Doing so without the permission of the instructor will be considered an Honor Code violation and may also be a violation of other state and federal laws, such as the Copyright Act.

## RESPECT

I will do everything I can to cultivate an open, safe, and enjoyable atmosphere for discussion. I ask you to do the same, treating one another and the writers we encounter with respect. Respect need not always mean agreement.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

## WEIGHTED ASSIGNMENTS

15% Attendance & Engagement	12.5% “Hot Spot” Analysis	30% Critical Essay
15% Contributions to the course blog (2% x 3 posts, 1% x 9 comments)	12.5% Article Review	15% Final Project

Percentage	Letter	Emory Quality Points	Explanation
94.00-100	A	4.0	Excellent
90.00-93.99	A-	3.7	Excellent in some significant ways
87.00-89.99	B+	3.3	Highly proficient
83.00-86.99	B	3.0	Proficient
80.00-82.99	B-	2.7	Proficient in some significant ways
77.00-79.99	C+	2.3	Nearly proficient
73.00-76.99	C	2.0	Below proficient
70.00-72.99	C-	1.7	Below proficient
67.00-69.99	D+	1.3	Barely acceptable
60.00-66.99	D	1.0	Barely acceptable
00.00-59.99	F	0.0	Unacceptable

I especially value process: preparing carefully for class, contributing every week to the blog, asking questions and listening to others’ questions, taking risks (and acknowledging when they’re not so successful), incorporating feedback into future writing, and taking time to reflect on your learning. Your personal growth in meeting the course outcomes will be factored into the final course grade.

## ATTENDANCE &amp; ENGAGEMENT

The success of this course depends significantly on your thorough preparation for and active engagement in class meetings. I expect everyone to contribute in some way. If you find it difficult to speak in a group, you are welcome to meet with me to discuss some ways for you to participate.

You will complete a midterm and final self-assessment of your attendance & engagement. Your midterm self-assessment should help you reflect on what you are doing well—and should keep doing—as well as how you can improve. Your final self-assessment will form the basis for this portion of your grade. (I do reserve the right to adjust that grade.)

Here are baseline standards for attendance:

1. Read, think about, and take notes on the assigned text(s) before class;
2. Have a copy of the assigned text(s) accessible during class;
3. Arrive in class prior to our start time;
4. Remain mentally attentive as well as physically present.
5. Actively take notes on concepts, passages, questions, or terms.

Here are some ideas of how to demonstrate engagement during class:

1. Raise ideas from our assigned texts for class discussion, including directing our attention to specific moments you found evocative, inspiring, infuriating, or otherwise significant;
2. Ask questions about materials or ideas you found puzzling or difficult;
3. Listen carefully to classmates and respond to their ideas or questions;
4. Respond to a question that Dr. S asks;

5. Volunteer to read aloud;

Aim to contribute in at least one of these ways each class period. You do not need to talk a lot to make a worthwhile contribution!

If are sick, please do not come to class. If you know that you will be absent, it would be a courtesy to inform me ahead of time by email. More information on make-up work will be provided.

## COURSE BLOG

Three times during the semester, you will be assigned to write a post of 250-400 words on the course blog; each of your posts will be due **by 9pm Monday** on the assigned text(s) for Tuesday's class. Look up writers' biographies (enough to know, for example, whether or not they are living and the appropriate pronouns to use) and give your posts distinctive titles. Quoting at least one passage from the text(s), cited parenthetically with a page number (Le Guin 42) and situated in the context of the entire reading (or listening or viewing) for Tuesday, offer an interpretation of the text's aesthetics, concepts, and themes or pose an interpretive question about it.

During weeks when you are not posting, you are responsible for writing a brief comment (75-150 words) on a classmate's post **by 12:30pm** before Tuesday's class. Your comment must quote and cite a new passage from the reading for Tuesday.

Before you publish a post, read through any previous posts for the day; before you comment on a post, read through any existing comments on that post. Whether you are posting or commenting, anchor your work in a specific moment in the text and aim to move the conversation forward.

Late posts or comments will receive no more than half credit, if completed before class, and no credit after that. You can make up *one missed comment* over the course of the semester. The course blog is for the use of this class only, and I expect you to maintain your peers' confidentiality.

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Your "Hot Spot" Analysis, Article Review, and Critical Essay should be typed and double-spaced in a normal 12-point font (Garamond, **Times New Roman**, preferably not Courier). Please use one-inch margins and submit the file through the Assignments function in Canvas. I will provide separate instructions for each assignment and its accompanying self-assessment.

Follow either MLA or Chicago citation style. I recommend that you refer to the Purdue OWL site as a resource for proper citation: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html). Remember to evaluate all sources that you consult and to cite every source that you use (whether a book, article, interview, website, or other kind). I am happy to discuss acceptable sources or citation.

Due dates are there to enable both you and I to manage our workflow. You are entitled to a **48-hour extension bank**, meaning that you can submit one major assignment—this does *not* apply to the course blog—48 hours after the deadline or two assignments 24 hours after the deadline, provided that you notify me by email before the original deadline. In professional life, it is crucial to communicate with colleagues so that you do not inconvenience them. If something comes up despite your best intentions to be organized and responsible, please communicate with me about the possibility of submitting late work. You do not need to divulge personal details.

If you have any questions about my expectations, ask me! Feel free to email me, talk to me after class, sign up for a time during my office hours, or make an appointment to talk at another time.

## **INCLUSIVE LEARNING AND RESOURCES**

I value your growth and success in this course, and I recognize that we all learn differently. It is my goal that you feel comfortable discussing any questions you may have with me. If aspects of this course exclude you or prevent you from learning, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we will find ways for you to participate that meet both your needs and the goals of the course.

## **ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

The Department of Accessibility Services (DAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. It is your responsibility to request accommodations. To do so, register with DAS at <https://accessibility.emory.edu/students/>. Accommodations cannot be retroactively applied so I encourage you to contact DAS as early as possible and then contact me to discuss how we will implement your accommodations. You can contact DAS at [accessibility@emory.edu](mailto:accessibility@emory.edu) or 404-727-9877.

## **COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

Free and confidential counseling services and support are available from Emory CAPS. This can be an invaluable resource when stress makes your work more challenging than it ought to be. Visit <https://counseling.emory.edu/> or call 404-727-7450.

## **STUDENT CASE MANAGEMENT AND INTERVENTION SERVICES**

Student Case Management and Intervention Services <https://success.emory.edu/> assists students on an ongoing basis and in times of crisis – including but not limited to meeting academic, medical, financial, and social challenges. Students, or anyone concerned about a student, experiencing active crisis can call the Student Intervention Services crisis line at 404-430-1120.

## **WRITING CENTER**

The Emory Writing Center is a great resource for writers of all skill levels, and I encourage you to take advantage of it. The full staff of undergraduate tutors and graduate fellows is available to support Emory College students as they work on any type of writing assignment in any field. Tutors can assist with a range of projects, from traditional papers and presentations to websites and other multimedia projects. They will work with you on concerns including idea development, structure, use of sources, grammar, and word choice. They do not proofread for you. Instead, they discuss strategies and resources that you can use as they write, revise, and editor their own work. The Writing Center opens for spring on [date tba]. Learn more and make an appointment at [writingcenter.emory.edu](http://writingcenter.emory.edu).



## SCHEDULE

Tu Jan 10 Introduction, including icebreaker about place without proper names

### *Living in the Anthropocene*

Th Jan 12 Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, “The ‘Anthropocene,’” from the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme Newsletter (May 2000) (C)  
Robert Macfarlane, from *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (C)  
Tishani Doshi, “Species,” <https://granta.com/species-doshi/>

### *Imagining Utopia*

Tu Jan 17 Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Ch 1-4, pp. 1-125  
Return completed & signed Student Information Questionnaire

Th Jan 19 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Ch 5-6, pp. 126-191

M Jan 23 Blog posts by group #1 due by 9pm

Tu Jan 24 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Ch 7-8, pp. 192-270  
excerpt from Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516) (C)

Th Jan 26 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Ch 9-10, pp. 271-335

M Jan 30 Blog posts by group #2 due by 9pm

Tu Jan 31 Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, Ch 11-13, pp. 336-387

Th Feb 2 Individual conferences on drafts of “Hot Spot” Analysis

### *Confronting Planetary Crisis*

M Feb 6 Blog posts by group #3 due by 9pm

Tu Feb 7 Philippe Squarzoni, *Climate Changed*, pp. 8-222

Th Feb 9 *Climate Changed*, pp. 224-294

**“Hot Spot” Analysis (3-4pp), with self-assessment, due by 5pm on Canvas**

M Feb 13 Blog posts by group #4 due by 9pm

Tu Feb 14 *Climate Changed*, pp. 296-467

Th Feb 20 Rob Nixon, selection from *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (C)

Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, “History Project” (C)

Susanne Rust, “How the U.S. betrayed the Marshall Islands” (November 2019)

<https://www.latimes.com/projects/marshall-islands-nuclear-testing-sea-level-rise/>

M Feb 20 Blog posts by group #1 due by 9pm

Tu Feb 21 Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, Ch 1-31, pp. 1-127

Th Feb 23 Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, Ch 32-46, pp. 128-192

F Feb 24 **Midterm Attendance & Engagement self-assessment due by 5pm on Canvas**

- M Feb 27 Blog posts by group #2 due by 9pm  
 Tu Feb 28 Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, Ch 47-64, pp. 193-321
- Th Mar 2 Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, Ch 65-77, pp. 323-385
- Tu/Th Mar 7/9 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK
- M Mar 13 Blog posts by group #3 due by 9pm  
 Tu Mar 14 Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, Ch 78-96, pp. 387-500
- Th Mar 16 Robinson, *The Ministry for the Future*, Ch 97-106, pp. 501-563  
 Bring to class an electronic or paper copy of the article you have decided to review.
- M Mar 20 Blog posts by group #4 due by 9pm  
 Tu Mar 21 Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, Ch 17, “Utopias” (C)  
 The American Vandal podcast, Season 4, Episode 7, *The Ministry for the Future*  
 (Worldwide Climate Teach-In Special Episode) with Sheri-Marie Harrison, Anna  
 Kornbluh, & Min Hyoung Song  
<https://marktwainstudies.com/MinistryForTheFuture/>
- Th Mar 23 Draft of Article Review due in class for peer-review workshop  
 F Mar 24 **Article Review (4-5pp), with self-assessment, due by 5pm on Canvas**

### ***Afrofuturism & Africanfuturism***

- M Mar 27 Blog posts by group #1 due by 9pm  
 Tu Mar 28 Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Ch 1-9, pp. 1-99  
 “Afrofuturism” <https://haenfler.sites.grinnell.edu/afrofuturism/>
- Th Mar 30 Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Ch 10-13, pp. 101-49  
 Butler, “‘Devil Girl from Mars’: Why I Write Science Fiction”  
[http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/butler\\_talk\\_index.html](http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/butler_talk_index.html)
- M Apr 3 Blog posts by group #2 due by 9pm  
 Tu Apr 4 Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, Ch 14-21, pp. 151-269  
 Shelley Streeby, selection from *Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making  
 through Science Fiction and Activism* (C)
- Th Apr 6 Butler, Ch 22-25, pp. 270-329, and “A Conversation,” pp. 333-41
- Fri Apr 7 Critical Essay proposal due by 5pm on Canvas
- M Apr 10 Blog posts by group #3 due by 9pm  
 Tu Apr 11 Watch *Pumzi* (dir. Wanuri Kahiu) on Vimeo or Youtube (21 minutes)  
 Cajetan Iheka, selection from *African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics*, Ch 1,  
 “Waste Reconsidered: Afrofuturism, Technologies of the Past, and the History of  
 the Future,” 25-39 (C)



Optional: Wanuri Kahiu, “Ancestors of the Future,” from *African Futures* (C)

Th Apr 13 Bring to class a hard copy sentence outline of your Critical Essay

M Apr 17 Blog posts by group #4 due by 9pm

Tu Apr 18 Nnedi Okorafor, “Africanfuturism Defined”

<http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html>

Lesley Nneka Arimah, “What It Means When a Man Falls from the Sky” (C)

Hard copy draft (5+pp) of Critical Essay due at the start of class

Th Apr 20 Last day of class

Selection from *All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis*,  
edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katherine K. Wilkinson

F Apr 21 **Critical Essay due by 5pm on Canvas**

**Final Attendance & Engagement Self-Assessment due by 5:30pm on Canvas**

Final exam period tba **Final Project due on Canvas**