LIT 524 (section 1) – Anthropocene Dreams

Class Time: Thursdays 6:30-9:30pm, LA 207
Prof. Louise Economides (louise.economides@mso.umt.edu)  Office: LA 227
Office Hours: Wed/Fri from 10am-12noon and by appointment

Required Texts:

- Atwood, Margaret. *MaddAddam.*
- De Lillo, Don. *White Noise.*
- Moore, Jason W. *Capitalism in the Web of Life.*
- VanderMeer, Jeff. *Annihilation.*

Course Description: How has literature responded to what Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz refer to as the “shock of the Anthropocene”? If we have entered an historically unprecedented phase in human history wherein our species’ collective impact on planet Earth is analogous to what Michel Serres (and others) have described as a “geological” force (both in its scope and duration), how does this impact our inherited ideas regarding humanism, technology, sustainability and the future of the arts? What representational challenges does “dreaming” the Anthropocene pose for literature, and why are apocalyptic (rather than adaptive) visions of our ecological future so common? This course will examine contemporary literary responses to material and political dislocations associated with the Anthropocene, including global climate change, loss of biodiversity, exponential human population growth, the “great acceleration” of technology (including bio- and geo-engineering) and the hegemony of capitalist petromodernity.

We’ll be looking at definitions of the “Anthropocene” by theorists such as Bonneuil and Fressoz, Purdy, Moore, Morton, Clark, Kolbert, Vogel and others. We’ll also examine debates about when to locate the Anthropocene’s historical origins and objections to Anthropocene theory from critics who charge that it is universalist, technocratic and/or arrogantly reinforces (rather than challenges) anthropocentric subjectivity. A final overarching goal of the course will be to explore how literary responses to the Anthropocene overlap with but also differ significantly from earlier attempts to respond to our “postmodern” ecological condition.
Graded Work  Please note:  *Papers must be hard copies – I do not accept e-mailed essays* (if you are unable to attend class or your paper is late, please put hard copy of essay in my departmental mailbox in LA 133).

1) **Paper:** 15-20 page final research paper, with a minimum of 6-8 secondary sources. A prospectus (one page paper topic summary plus annotated bibliography) will be due in week ten.

2) **Group Presentation:** Working with a peer, you will be leading our discussion on a text during one class. Please see separate assignment sheet which details requirements for presentations.

3) **Class Participation and Attendance:** Regular attendance (no more than 1 absence) and active participation are vital to your success in this course. “Active Participation” includes:
   a) coming to class having carefully read and annotated assigned texts;
   b) sharing your thoughts about the readings during our class discussions;
   c) asking focused questions concerning the readings, indicating prior preparation;
   d) responding to questions posed by your peers and/or instructor;
   e) actively participating in group work;
   f) coming to office hours to discuss issues we don’t have time to cover in class.

Course Policies

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism is a violation of trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321](http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSA/index.cfm/page/1321).” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper.

**Accommodation:** The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

**GRADED WORK POINT TOTALS**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essay (including prospectus)</td>
<td>700</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and Attendance</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
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**WEEKLY SCHEDULE** (subject to changes).  **M** = Readings Available on **Moodle**

**WEEK ONE (1/26):** Course Introduction; Defining the Anthropocene: Bonneuil Fressoz from *The Shock of the Anthropocene* (M)
UNIT ONE: LATE CAPITALISM AND THE “END OF NATURE”


WEEK THREE (2/9): De Lillo, *White Noise*; Heise, from *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (M)

WEEK FOUR (2/16): Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life*; Vogel, from *Thinking Like a Mall* (M)

WEEK FIVE (2/23): Jeffers, poems (M); Donnelly from *The Cloud Corporation* (M)  
Roberson, from *To See the Earth Before the End of the World* (M)

UNIT TWO: WELCOME TO THE ANTHROPOCENE – HUMANITY AS A GEO-HISTORICAL FORCE


*Group Presentation #1*

*Group Presentation #2*

WEEK NINE (3/23): SPRING BREAK (no class)

WEEK TEN (3/30): Davies, from *The Birth of the Anthropocene*; McKay, poems (M); *prospectus due*

UNIT THREE: VISIONS OF EXTINCTION AND SURVIVAL

WEEK ELEVEN (4/6): Kolbert, from *The Sixth Extinction*; Mortimer-Sandilands, “Melancholy Natures”; Spahr, “Gently Now” (all 3 readings on Moodle)  
*Group Presentation #3*

WEEK TWELVE (4/13): Morton, *Hyperobjects*; Gander, from *Redstart* (M); *Group Presentation #4*

*Group Presentation # 5*

WEEK FOURTEEN (4/27): Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*; *Group Presentation #6*

WEEK FIFTEEN (5/4): Atwood, *MaddAddam*; Ciobanu, “Rewriting the Human at the End of the Anthropocene in Margaret Atwood’s MaddAddam Trilogy”;

*Group Presentation #5*
Group Presentation #7