

ENG 322
T R, 12:30 – 1:45pm
TLC 247

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Environmental Literatures and Cultures: Climate Change Fiction

This section of ENGL 322: Environmental Literatures and Cultures explores the new genre of “climate change fiction,” or “cli fi.” In this course, we’ll read novels, short stories, and graphic novels to explore the various ways that creative writers are grappling with the difficult task of representing the unpredictable effects of climate change. Indeed, we’ll also explore whether there can be such a thing as “cli fi,” asking whether novels and short stories, with their emphasis on individual characters and lives, can accommodate the planetary thinking and geologic scales of time and space that climate change demands.

Work for this course includes two analytical essays, a presentation, and a series of short prompts. A high percentage of the grade is dedicated to participation—students should be prepared to contribute to discussions in class and/or online.

Learning Objectives:

- Frame a thesis about a text(s) and argue it in writing, using relevant supporting evidence.
- Participate effectively in oral discussions of fiction, making well-supported claims about ideas, issues and problems.
- Explain and account for the rise of cli fi as a genre and appreciate its place within 21C literature.
- Identify the key parameters of the genre of cli fi and the complexities of representing climate change.

Required Books (in the order we’ll read them)

Phillip Squarzoni, *Climate Changed*
Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140*
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*
Cherie Demaline, *The Marrow Thieves*
Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation*
Richard McGuire, *Here*
Additional pdfs, available on BbLearn

Assessment

20% Participation (includes attendance and contribution to discussion)

10% Presentation

10% Discussion Starters (four 150-word posts; 2.5% each)

20% Prompts (four one- to two-page response papers; 5% each)

15% Essay I (four-five pages on a topic of your choice)

25% Essay II (six-eight pages on a topic of your choice)

Attendance and Participation

Active, informed class participation is crucial to your learning, as well as to our enjoyment of the course. For this reason, I give it substantial weighting. Throughout the course I will endeavour to ensure that all students have opportunities to try out ideas, propose readings, and give considered or spontaneous personal responses in class. As this is a discussion-based class, you are expected to speak in each and every class and ask questions following student presentations. *I understand, however, that some people find it quite difficult to speak in class. In addition to monitoring in-class dialogue, I will also monitor discussions on BBLearn and consider any conversations that we have during my office hours.*

You need to attend all classes and bring along the relevant text. I understand that life happens—you may miss three classes with no questions asked. *After your third absence, each additional absence will result in the subtraction of a full letter grade from your final grade* (for example, your B will become a C if you miss four classes). I will only consider exceptional medical/personal circumstances outside of this three-absence limit. You are responsible for any material missed during your absence.

Beyond attending class you must come prepared. This means more than simply doing the assigned reading. You should arrive to class with notes, questions and frustrations. Get into the habit of writing down your responses while you are reading. Which words are confusing? Which passages remind you of another text? Which images are particularly striking? How do the ideas raised in my lecture and our class discussions manifest themselves in this text? Allow these initial thoughts to inform your reading responses. If you do not have any of these thoughts while you are reading you are not reading closely enough—go back and do it again. Write on the page, circle words, get your pen out. Stop to think while you are reading and jot your thoughts down.

Electronic devices such as cellphones, laptops and tablets can greatly facilitate research, but in the classroom they offer too many distractions. If you have a special need that necessitates use of a laptop, please let me know. I will occasionally invite you to bring in electronic devices (when resources are only available online, or when we need to conduct research in class). In general, though, you should not use laptops and tablets in my class. You should always silence your cellphone and keep out of sight in a bag or pocket while in my class.

Finally, please remember to keep an open mind during our discussions. Certain ideas that we discuss will be controversial; I do not demand that you agree with them, but do expect you to understand them and be able to discuss them academically in a civil manner. You must also show respect for your classmates and me. You may not agree with another's position, and you may not even respect some viewpoints offered by others, but you *must* respect your classmates as contributing members of the class.

Presentation

The representation of climate change is a big and unwieldy subject and to aid our study of it this semester each student will prepare and deliver one ten-to fifteen-minute presentation. You have two choices in this presentation:

1. If you are artistically inclined, you can choose to represent a recent news article about climate change creatively. If you choose this path, I encourage you to be very creative—you might opt, for example, to translate a piece of climate change news into music, poetry, a short story, a film, a painting, etc. In your presentation, you should present your creative work (in full or in part, if it exceeds the time limit of the assignment) *and* the news article, and discuss the choices that you made in producing this work.
2. If you are not artistically inclined, you can analyze someone else's creative representation of climate change. Again, I encourage you to be creative—you might discuss a song (or full album), TV series or episode, film, novel, short story, poem, etc. As in option 1, your presentation should both feature a sample of the text that you're analyzing *and* a relevant news article on climate change, as well as a discussion of what connects the two.

Above all, your presentation should help the class better understand the complexities of representing climate change. I will assess you on your creativity, insightfulness, and presentation skills. Please see the "Presentation Rubric" on BbLearn for more information.

Discussion Starters and Prompts

To improve our discussion of primary texts, you will post "discussion starters" to the discussion board on BbLearn by the start of class (12:30pm) on the day that we first consider a text. Each discussion starter should be at least 150-words and should articulate your initial reaction to the reading that I have assigned for that day. Feel free to post questions, isolate and analyze specific passages, or make connections across texts. Be prepared to speak about your discussion starter if I ask you to in class. You must submit four discussion starters over the course of the semester. If you submit more than four discussion starters, I will only count the four that receive the highest grades.

To prepare you to write your two formal essays, you will submit a "prompt" to the BbLearn dropbox by midnight on the final day that we discuss a primary text. This prompt should flesh out your initial reaction to the text, perhaps making use of the ideas that I foreground in my lecture at the beginning of the semester. You must submit four prompts. If you submit more than four prompts, I will only count the four that receive the highest grades.

I will assess your prompts more for quality of thought than for style or grammar. That said, please do not abandon good writing practice. I do not expect you to consult secondary research in your prompts. Think of depth instead of width—the best prompts will focus on one thought/idea raised by your reading and our class discussions and explore it in detail. My lecture will give you ideas that you might pursue, but I also encourage you to bring your own interests to bear on each primary text. You should think of your prompts as a vehicle for pursuing aspects of a text that interest you. *Most importantly, you should think of each prompt as an opportunity to suggest potential topics for a longer essay.* Your prompts can be comparative as long as they address the primary text that we are reading in class in some capacity.

As these are more casual assignments than the formal essays, you should feel free to use language in line with the following: "If I were to write an essay on X text, I would begin by discussing Y." You should feel free to compare primary texts to each other, especially in the later weeks of the term. If you are unsure how to begin proposing a essay topic, you might find the following exercises helpful:

- Think about the text from the perspective of some of the main ideas of this course: space, time, narration, character. What ideas are particularly relevant to the study of this text? What type of comment on climate change does this text offer up? What questions or challenges does it raise about the ability to represent climate change in fiction?

- Perform close readings by focusing on one key passage to analyze literary elements such as style, tone, point of view, figurative language, etc. Discuss the significance, connotations and even etymology of particular word choices and think about the connections between form and the argument of the text. In your close reading explain why this passage is important to your interpretation of the work as a whole.

BEWARE! Prompts are due to the BbLearn dropbox by midnight on the final (or only, if this is the case) day that we discuss a primary text. *I will not accept late prompts.* Each prompt must provide an MLA citation for all texts that you address in the assignment. I will grade your prompt as follows:

- 90 – 100%: strong work; accurate bibliographic citation; insightful and illuminating ideas; you teach us something new about the text(s); all portions of the prompt indicate strong and clear thinking; assignment proposes excellent essay topic
- 80 – 90%: good work; there may be a mistake or two in the bibliographic citation; fine start on ideas but could use more development; some portion of the prompt seems a bit weak; assignment proposes promising essay topic
- 70 – 80%: satisfactory work; some noticeable mistakes; seems like prompt was written without much reflection; hazy grasp of the text(s), its arguments and components; not all portions are addressed in a satisfactory manner; assignment proposes viable yet uninspiring essay topic
- 60 – 70%: weak work; major mistakes in bibliography or absent altogether; poor understanding of text(s) and its significance; most portions of prompt weak; assignment proposes weak essay topic, or fails to do so altogether
- 0 points: not submitted

Essays

You will write two essays for this course, both on topics of your own choice. You should raise potential essay topics in your prompts and I'll provide time in two classes to discuss potential topics with your classmates. While my primary interest in these essays is original thought, I also expect you to demonstrate sound knowledge of the contextual and critical history of primary texts. In addition, both essays must make sound use of secondary sources. *Please refer to the grading rubric below for a thorough discussion of what I expect from formal written work.* Please also ensure that all secondary research is properly sourced and cited according to MLA guidelines.

Each essay should be written in Times, 12-point font and double-spaced. Please number all pages. Type your name, the date, course number and assignment number in the top left-hand of the first page. All essays should have a title (feel free to be creative here), centered, on the first page. Failure to follow these instructions may lower your grade.

Essays are due to the BbLearn dropbox by midnight on the due date. *I will deduct five percent for each day Essay I is late, including weekends. **I will not accept late submissions for Essay II.***

Grading Rubric for Formal Essays

Please recognize the following descriptions are guidelines. Each essay is different and must be assessed on its own strengths and weaknesses.

A (93-100%)

An A essay is of outstanding quality. This essay will teach me something about a text(s) I know well; it will be original, provocative, inspiring and make me want to share it with other readers. The scope of this essay will be narrow enough that it will argue one point thoroughly. Even if I totally disagree with this point, I will appreciate the beauty of its argument and appreciate its sophisticated and thoughtful thesis. This essay will have a logical structure and be grammatically perfect. Ample evidence from primary text(s) will be provided, and secondary research will be illuminating and smoothly integrated. Essays earning the upper grades of this margin will be bordering on publishable.

A- (90-92%)

An A- essay is excellent and nearly lives up to the standards of the A essay but lacks the intellectual power. While this essay demonstrates excellent close reading skills and strong integration of appropriate secondary sources, it will have the occasional minor problem, such as questionable word choice, small grammatical errors or the odd awkward transition between paragraphs. An A- essay has no major errors.

B+ (88-89%)

A B+ essay is very good—indeed, it is almost excellent. Like the A and A- essay, this essay will have a logical structure and make good use of evidence and secondary research to provide a strong critical analysis of a text(s). However, this essay will lack the intellectual adventurousness of the A and A- essay, often choosing to play it safe instead of sticking its neck on the line to argue something provocative and original. A B+ essay makes good use of evidence from the primary text(s) and relies on appropriate secondary sources, although use of this research could often be more sophisticated. There are no major errors in this essay, but often minor lapses in logic or occasional problems with word choice, transitions, grammar and punctuation.

B (83-87%)

A B essay shows promise but falls short in one major area. Like essays awarded a higher grade, this essay will have a strong and interesting (though perhaps not wholly original or inspiring) thesis statement and will be generally competent in its analysis. A B essay will feature secondary research, but will do so in a less sophisticated and critical way than a B+ or A essay. This essay may suffer from wordiness and have minor structural faults such as weak transitions, problems with word choice or grammatical or punctuation errors. This essay will be less engaging than essays awarded a higher grade and will lack their stylistic flair.

B- (80-82%)

A B- essay is a good essay but lacks sophistication, originality and rigour. This essay may lack support for key assertions (it may favour generalizations over supported claims, for example), and present an argument that, while valid, is largely uninspiring. A B- thesis is workable but not overly creative or insightful; B- use of research will be sound but not engaging. This essay may suffer from wordiness, problems with word choice, awkward transitions and punctuation and grammatical errors, and may feature short sections of plot summary.

C+ (78-79%)

A C+ essay is slightly above average. It will argue a commonplace idea and feature insufficient evidence from a primary text(s) to make its case effectively. This essay may fail to deal with a significant idea/issue, as well as feature plot summary instead of critical analysis. The structure of a C+ essay may be unclear and be marred by occasional lapses in logic. This essay will not provide enough secondary sources to support its argument

and will suffer from frequent grammatical and syntactical errors such as the comma splice, sentence fragments or run-on sentences. This essay will be largely uninspiring and may leave me confused at times.

C (73-77%)

A C essay is distinctly average. As such, it is uninspiring, unoriginal and unexciting. This essay will be marred by significant weakness, such as frequent misreading of evidence or lack thereof, ample plot summary, loose or illogical structure, lapses in logic and a lack of sufficient secondary research. A C essay often rehashes class discussion, demonstrating little willingness to think beyond what is provided. A C essay may also fall short of the assigned page length.

C- (70-72%)

A C- essay is below average. This essay will have a weak thesis that is unoriginal, poorly phrased and something that might not need to be proven. This weak thesis will lead to an unsophisticated analysis that lacks sufficient evidence from a primary text(s) and secondary research and will often descend into blatant plot summary. The structure of the C- essay is loose, illogical or absent, leading to confusion and more work than necessary from the reader. The meaning of this essay may be obscured by wordiness and major errors, such as problematic word choice, awkward transitions, imprecise diction and mistakes in grammar and punctuation.

D (60-69%)

See me immediately if you write a D essay. A D essay will attempt to argue an extremely weak thesis or present no thesis at all. Plot summary often dominates. D essays suffer from major structural problems and grammatical and syntactical errors that make any meaning difficult to decipher and/or follow. This essay will make poor use of evidence from a primary text(s), present no meaningful analysis of that text(s) and provide insufficient secondary research, if any.

F (59% and below)

F essays are unacceptable for one or more of the following readings: plagiarism (intentional or accidental), complete misunderstanding of material, no discernable argument, complete lack of effort, significant failure to meet required page length (by more than 20%), failure to meet the basic communication requirements of standard written English, failure to submit.

MLA-Style Resources

All essays must follow MLA style. *I will not accept any other style of citation.* For help learning MLA style, visit the Purdue Online Writing Lab's MLA webpage (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>).

Plagiarism

I will not tolerate plagiarism in this course—no exceptions. If I discover that you have cheated on any of your assignments, I will give you a failing grade for the course and refer you to the Dean of Students.

According to university and departmental policy, plagiarism is claiming someone else's work (either ideas or words) as your own. Plagiarism includes:

- Copying, quoting or paraphrasing documents of any kind without proper and explicit citation of sources.
- Use of another person's words or ideas with attribution and explicit citation.
- Submitting another person's work as your own.
- Co-writing work with another scholar and claiming it as solely yours.
- Submitting work for this course that you have previously submitted for a different course, in part or in full.

If you have any questions about what I consider plagiarism, how to cite your work, or university and department policies on plagiarism, please see me.

Center for Disability Access and Resources Reasonable Accommodations Statement

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have documented temporary or permanent disabilities. All accommodations must be approved through the Center for Disability Access and Resources located in the Bruce M. Pitman Center, Suite 127 in order to notify your instructor(s) as soon as possible regarding accommodation(s) needed for the course.

Phone: 208-885-6307

Email: cdar@uidaho.edu

Website: www.uidaho.edu/current-students/cdar

Firearms

The University of Idaho bans firearms from its property with only limited exceptions. One exception applies to persons who hold a valid Idaho enhanced concealed carry license, provided those firearms remain concealed at all times. If an enhanced concealed carry license holder's firearm is displayed, other than in necessary self-defense, it is a violation of University policy and I will notify local law enforcement. Please contact local law enforcement (call 911) to report firearms on University property.

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center is located in the Idaho Commons, Rm 323. I highly recommend that you use the Writing Center for help at any stage of the writing process, even if you are already a good writer.

ENGL 322 Calendar

Month	Tuesday	Thursday
Jan		11. Introduction and Welcome, What is “Cl: F?”
	16. Squarzoni, <i>Climate Changed</i> Pp 1-222	18. Squarzoni, <i>Climate Changed</i> Pp 223-467
	23. Lecture: “Space, Time, Narration, Character”	25. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> *
Feb	30. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> Pp 82-171	1. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> Pp 172-260
	6. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> Pp 261-349	8. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> Pp 350-437
	13. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> Pp 438-519	15. Robinson, <i>New York 2140</i> + Pp 520-613
	20. Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> * Pp 1-86	22. Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> Pp 87-158
Mar	27. Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> Pp 159-250	1. Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> + Pp 251-332
	6. Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i> * Pp 1-79	8. Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i> Pp 80-153
	13. SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS	15. SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS
	20. Dimaline, <i>The Marrow Thieves</i> + Pp 152-231	22. Academic Writing Discussion, Essay I Speed Dating
	27. ERIN TRAVELLING: NO CLASS	29. ERIN TRAVELLING: NO CLASS

Apr	3. Short Stories I (pdf on BbLearn) * Atwood, "Time Capsule Found on a Dead Planet" Mitchell, "The Siphoners" Boyle, "The Siskiyou, 1989" Essay I Due by Midnight	5. Short Stories II (pdf on BbLearn) + Bacigalupi, "The Tamarisk Hunter" Flynn and Hudson, "The Sunshine State" Okorafor, "Poison Fish"
	10. VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> *	12. VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i>
	17. VanderMeer, <i>Annihilation</i> +	19. ERIN TRAVELLING: NO CLASS
	24. McGuire, <i>Here</i> +	26. Review, Essay II Speed Dating
May	1. DEAD WEEK: NO CLASS	3. DEAD WEEK: NO CLASS
	7. Essay II Due by Midnight	

*: Opportunity to submit discussion starters; post to BbLearn discussion board by 12:30pm

+: Opportunity to submit prompts; post to BbLearn dropbox by midnight