

This is an introductory course, designed to give you a sense of some central topics, ideas, directions and thinkers in the cultural history of nature. Rather than providing a comprehensive or periodised overview, the course is built to equip you with some initial tools, reference points and perspectives that can help you navigate this very broad intellectual terrain. The aim is to help you develop a sense of how issues and authors from the past connect to the present—to our own everyday lives and practices, as well as to the urgent and critical issues we confront, both here in Norway and globally, in an age of ecological turmoil.

By the end of the course, you should have experience engaging with textual, visual and material sources from a perspective informed by the cultural history of nature. You should also have some sense of the diversity of ideas about relationships between human beings and "nature", of how these have developed over time and of how they are embedded in everyday practices, institutions and relationships—including our own.

The course focuses on readings, with a number of core readings per session. You will encounter a range of authors and ideas, from many disciplines and historical periods. Many of the readings are quite challenging, both conceptually and in terms of the language they use. Do not be intimidated by this: you are **not** expected to master all the texts, and the course should include more than enough material that if you find yourself stumped by one text or author, you can move on to texts that work better for you. The selection is intended to give you a chance to begin exploring the breadth, richness and scope of this field—the many approaches, perspectives, styles of thought, writing and argument—and find topics and approaches that resonate with your own interests.

Structure

The course is organised into twelve main sessions, plus a wrap-up session at the end. Each session is focused on a different topic and a different set of core readings. As you can see from the course calendar in Canvas, the course is also structured into three main sections, of four sessions each, with a week-long break between each. This is intended to give you all a breather after each "block," and allow you some time to process ideas, go over your notes, prepare for presentations and start to look at the readings for the next section.

Writing

Over the course of the term you will write four short texts, or "kvalifiseringsoppgaver". Each of these should be two pages long (700 words), and each should have a different focus: an image, an object, a place and a text. We'll discuss the format and requirements for these short papers in more detail in class, but as a minimum, each should relate your chosen focus to at least one text or topic we have addressed in the course. Each will also come with a writing prompt or specification—such as "write in the first-person singular", or "write as an archaeologist from the future". We'll determine these prompts based on class discussion. Now, this is important: **as long as you complete the assignment, and give me two pages that fulfil the formal instructions, you will pass.**

This means that within the parameters of each assignment, you should feel free to experiment—with voice, genre, format, timeline, any aspect of the text. Be creative, and think of it as a space to try out different kinds of writing; anything goes, and you don't have to impress me or "sound smart". The aim

of these exercises is partly to keep you engaged with the course and the materials—but more importantly, they are also intended to create a space in which you can experiment with different ideas, approaches, methods, genres and styles of writing, develop your own critical voice and familiarise yourself with the material and ideas of the course on your own terms, connecting the readings to events and issues in your own experience. You are of course also welcome to draw on skills, literatures and source materials you are working with in other courses—just keep in mind that each of the short exercises has to respond to the prompt, and also address at least one text or topic we have discussed in class.

The four exercises are as follows, with deadlines. All deadlines except the first are provisional. I will discuss each writing exercise in more detail in class.

1. An image. **Due Feb 14, 5pm**
2. An object. **Due Mar 3, 5pm**
3. A place. **Due March 17, 5pm.**
4. A text. **Due March 31, 5pm.**

For each of these, your answer should describe your chosen focus or source material, drawing out how it is connected to some aspect of nature we have discussed in class, as well as to one class reading. How is nature present here, how can you use ideas of nature we have read about or discussed in class to describe and analyse what you're writing about? As I mentioned, the assignments will **not be marked**: you just have to complete them. There will however be at least one session in which you will engage with a form of peer commentary on each other's texts.

Your final term paper will be six to eight pages (2100 to 2800 words, including footnotes and references), written along similar lines to the short papers but offering a more substantive analysis. I will clarify the assignment for the term paper as the course progresses, based in part on how the class develops, so you should have ample time to think about it. The term paper *can* be based on one of the short-form writing exercises you have completed during the term, but it does not have to be.

Here are some general pointers that apply for all the writing you will do in class, but particularly for the final term paper:

- Double-check spelling, grammar and formatting before you hand in your work. Good presentation is an easy way to get a better mark. Make sure that references, citations and bibliography are well put together.
- Stay at or near the required length. Not too long, not too short, ideally just under.
- Use your own words. I want to see how you think. When referencing others, make sure you cite and quote correctly.
- Do not plagiarise. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and can get you into a lot of trouble. If you're not sure what constitutes plagiarism, ask me.

We will discuss writing assignments and assessment in more detail, but feel free to approach me individually if you have questions about anything related to this.

Group Presentations

Some of the sessions will focus on group presentations of assigned texts. How this works in practice will depend a little on the size of the class—so for the moment, these are general guidelines.

For each presentation, you should organise within your group to meet up before class, discuss the assigned text and prepare a presentation. These presentations should be no longer than 8 to 10 minutes, and should include at least two parts: a summary outline of the text and its main points, followed by a critical discussion, commentary or reflection based on your discussions within the group.

Your summary and discussion of the text are intended primarily for your classmates, who will not have read the text as closely as you have. The aim of the exercises is to give you some practice of collaborative work, and also to sharpen your time-keeping—a useful but often neglected academic skill. Keeping this in mind, the structure and format for the presentation **are up to you**, so—again, as with the writing exercises—feel free to experiment: you may design an academic powerpoint, or read a prepared text, or make a video, or script the presentation as a short dialogue between members of your group, or anything else you like.

Reading

I will provide more specific questions to guide your reading in the different topics—but to start out, here are some general questions to keep in mind for when engaging with the set texts, particularly the ones you will be presenting later in the course.

- * **Context.** When (and where) was this text written? What does it respond to? What else was happening at the time that might be relevant to your reading and interpretation? What other texts and authors does it draw on, reference, critique or (perhaps) ignore? What are the key traditions, movements, trends, events and problems that the text orients itself towards and draws in?
- * **Core argument.** Why was this text written, what is it trying to do? How does it do that? What are the main points of the argument? Does it make them effectively? Do you agree or disagree?
- * **Vocabulary, style, language.** What are the most important terms, phrases and concepts that the text uses? Are they well defined, do you find them problematic or confusing? What can you say about how the text is written, the language and style it uses?
- * **Critique.** What are the weak or problematic points of the text? Where and how would you disagree? What kinds of assumptions does it make, and are they warranted? Keep in mind that all texts are open to critique, none of the texts on the curriculum are perfect.
- * **Usefulness.** Did the text change anything about your thinking? Did you learn anything you didn't know?
- * **Disagreement.** Texts are open, multiple readings are legitimate and differences can be productive. Did you have any disagreements between you in the group? Did you interpret the text in different ways?
- * **Questions for class.** Try to specify some questions that the text leaves you with, and issues or questions that you would like to address to the rest of the class. Is there anything about the text that you find particularly difficult or challenging, or that it would be useful to discuss in class?

Sessions

The following gives you a broad overview of the course, including lectures, core readings and class exercises. I will probably adjust this as the course progresses, but all changes will be communicated in class and on Canvas.

If you have questions about any of this, feel free to contact me in person or by email, either in or outside class. I will respond within working hours.

1. Introduction Jan 28

Overview of the course, topics and readings. Discuss writing exercises, term paper, assessment criteria. Divide into groups for subsequent sessions.

Core Readings

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2008. "The Climate of History: Four theses". *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2): 197-222. [20 pages].

Thomas, Keith. 1984. *Man and the Natural World*. London: Penguin Books. [Chapter 1, 40 pages]

Williams, Raymond. 1980. "Ideas of Nature," in *Problems of Materialism and Culture*, Williams (ed.), pp. 67-85. [20 pages]

Exercises:

Inventory of interests. I will provide you with coloured index cards. During the class, write down three things you are interested in or that you hope to learn more about during the course. At the end of the class, put your answers in the box by the entrance. The answers should be anonymous.

Individual writing. Take five minutes to write down some of the ways you encountered or interacted with "nature" this morning.

Group discussion. In your groups, introduce yourselves to each other. Discuss the different ways you encountered nature this morning, and choose one to present to the rest of the class. Explain why you picked this particular one. Designate one person to collect written lists and pass them to me at the end of the class [I will make an overview and come back to this in later sessions].

2. National Jan 31

National natures.

Core Readings

Brenna, Brita. 2012. "Natures, Contexts and Cultural History." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 37 (4): 355-378. [25 pages]

Næss, Arne. "The Norwegian Roots of Deep Ecology". *The Trumpeter* Vol 21 No 2: 38-41. [5 pages]

Nynäs, Helena. 2018. "The Fairy-Tale of Early 20th Century Hydropower Development in Norway." *Environment, Space, Place* Vol 10 No 1: 15-38. [25 pages]

Reed, Peter and David Rothenberg. 1993. *Wisdom in the Open Air*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press ["Introduction", 35 pages].

Witoszek, Nina. 1997. "Arne Næss and the Norwegian Nature Tradition" *Worldviews* (1): 57-73. [20 pages]

Exercise:

Show and tell. Bring an image to class that speaks in some way to the idea of "Norwegian" nature. Discuss the images in your group, then choose one to present to the class. Why did you pick this one?

3. Purity Feb 4

Nature as pure, endangered, in need of protection. The sublime. National parks and their politics.

Core Readings

Carson, Rachel. 1994 [1962]. *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. [Chapters 1 to 3, 20 pages]

Cronon, William. 1996. "The Trouble with Wilderness" *Environmental History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 7-28 [20 pages]

Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. [Chapter 1, 10 pages]

Leopold, Aldo. 1949. *Sand County Almanac*. Oxford: Oxford University press. ["Thinking like a mountain", 5 pages]

Marx, Leo. "The Idea of Nature in America." *Daedalus* Vol. 137, No. 2, 8-21 [15 pages]

McKibben, Bill. 2003. *The End of Nature*. London: Bloomsbury. [Chapter 2, 50 pages]

Shaw, Philip. 2006. *The Sublime*. New York: Routledge. [Chapter 1, 10 pages]

Exercise

Show and tell. Bring to class an example of protected nature. This could be a place, an object, a narrative or story (a personal anecdote, say). If your example can not be physically brought into the classroom, reflect on how you will make it present. Discuss the various examples in your group, then choose one to present to the class. Why did you pick this one? What does it say?

4. Violence Feb 7

Nature and violence, the "state of nature".

Core Readings

Buchanan, Bruce. 2006. "Savagery and Civilization". *Ethnicities* Vol 6 No 1: 5-26. [20 pages]

Hobbes, Thomas. 1996. *Leviathan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Chapter XIII, 5 pages]

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2013. *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Press. ["Skywoman", "The Council of Pecans", 20 pages]

Locke, John. 1980. *Second Treatise of Government*. Indianapolis: Hackett. [Chapter 2, 7 pages]

Rose, Deborah Bird. 2011. "Flying Fox." *Australian Humanities Review* <http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2011/05/01/flying-fox-kin-keystone-kontaminant/> [13 pages].

Rousseau, Jean-Jaques. 1992. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Indianapolis: Hackett. [page 16-44, 30 pages].

Sahlins, Marshall. 2008. *The Western Illusion of Human Nature*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm. [Introduction plus "Hobbes and Adams", 15 pages]

Whitehead, Mark, Rhys Jones and Martin Jones. 2007. *The Nature of the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [pages 24-33, 10 pages]

Exercise

Show and tell. Bring to class an object that in some way addresses the relationship between nature and violence. Discuss your objects in your group, then choose one to present to the class. Why did you pick this one? What does it say?

5. Natural Feb 18

The politics of the natural.

Core Readings

Anderson, M. Kat. 2005. *Tending the Wild*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Introduction and chapter 1, 40 pages]

Denevan, William. 1992. "The Pristine Myth". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol 82, No 3: 369-385.

Merchant, Carolyn. 1989. *The Death of Nature*. San Francisco: Harper & Row. [Introduction and chapter 1, 40 pages]

Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona and Bruce Erickson (eds). 2010. *Queer Ecologies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. [Chapter 8, 20 pages]

Willems-Braun, Bruce. 1997. "Buried Epistemologies". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol 87 No 1: 3-31. [30 pages]

Exercise

Peer commentary. We will practice constructive peer engagement, circulating anonymised versions of your first writing exercise (due Feb 14) for commentary. Let me know as soon as possible if you have concerns about this exercise.

6. Control Feb 21

Control, power, domestication.

Core Readings

*ADDED Reinert, Hugo. 2019. "Requiem for a Junk-Bird." *Cultural Studies Review* Vol 25 No 1: 29-40. [10 pages].

Ritvo, Harriet. 1992. "At the Edge of the Garden". *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol 55 no 3: 363-378. [15 pages]

Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing like a State*. New Have: Yale University Press. [Introduction and chapter 1, 50 pages]

Swanson, Heather, Marianne Lien and Gro Ween (eds). 2018. *Domestication Gone Wild*. Durham: Duke University Press. [Introduction, 30 pages]

Whitehead, Mark, Rhys Jones and Martin Jones. 2007. *The Nature of the State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 1, 20 pages]

Guest Lecture

Leonoor Borgesius, PhD student, presenting on her PhD research.

7. Knowledge Feb 25

Knowable nature. Museums and institutions of knowledge. The role of animals in the experimental method.

Core Readings

Adams, William and Martin Mulligan (eds). 2003. *Decolonizing Nature*. Sterling: Earthscan. [Chapters 1 and 2, 50 pages]

Haraway, Donna. 1984. "Teddy Bear Patriarchy". *Social Text* No 11: 20-64. [45 pages]

Miller, Ian. 2013. *The Nature of the Beasts*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Introduction, 20 pages]

Shapin, Steven and Simon Schaffer. 1985. *Leviathan and the Air Pump*. Princeton: Princeton University Press [difficult book; read a chapter or two and see what you make of it].

Strum, Shirley. 1987. *Almost Human*. New York: Norton. [Foreword and chapter 1, 25 pages]

Guest Lecture

Bergsveinn Thorsson, "Nature in the museum".

8. Unnatural Feb 28

What is natural, what is not?

Core Readings

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. 1996. *Monster Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [Chapter 1, 20 pages]

Daston, Lorraine. 2019. *Against Nature*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press. [Chapter 5, 10 pages]

Haraway, Donna. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*. New York: Routledge. [Chapter 8, 35 pages]

9. Mobile Mar 10

Nature on the move, moving, in motion, being moved.

Core Readings

Crosby, Alfred. 2004. *Ecological Imperialism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 1 and 2, 40 pages]

van Dooren, Thom. 2014. *Flight Ways*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Intro, 1. 40 pages]

Egan, Michael. 2010. "Mercury's Web". *Radical History Review* No 107: 111-126. [15 pages]

Lightfoot, Kent, Lee Panich, Tsim Schneider, Sara Gonzalez. 2013. "European Colonialism and the Anthropocene" *Anthropocene* Vol 4: 101-115. [15 pages]

Exercise

Present and discuss. In your group, select one text from the curriculum (any week) and prepare a presentation on it. The presentation should be no more than 8 to 10 minutes. Explain why you picked this particular text.

10. Planetary Mar 13

Nature (and the Earth) seen from space.

Core Readings

Gabrys, Jennifer. 2016. *Program Earth*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. [Introduction, 25 pages]

Jasanoff, Sheila and Marybeth Martello. 2004. *Earthly Politics*. Cambridge: MIT Press. [Chapter 1, 20 pages]

Lazier, Benjamin. 2011. "Earthrise; or, the Globalization of the Earth Picture." Vol 116, No 3: 602-630. [30 pages]

Lovelock, James. 2000. *Gaia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Preface, 15 pages]

Margulis, Lynn. 1999. *The Symbiotic Planet*. London: Phoenix. [Prologue and chapter 8, 30 pages]

Exercise

Present and discuss. In your group, select one text from the curriculum (any week) and prepare a presentation on it. The presentation should be no more than 8 to 10 minutes. Explain why you picked this particular text.

Film Screening Mar 17

11. Anthropocene Mar 20

The Anthropocene, explored through objects and materials.

Core Readings

Davis, Heather. 2016. "Imperceptibility and Accumulation". *Camera Obscura* Vol 31 No 2: 187-193. [10 pages]

Deloughrey, Elizabeth, Jill Didur and Anthony Carrigan (eds). 2015. *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities*. New York: Routledge. [Chapter 14, 25 pages]

Lorimer, Jamie. 2015. *Wildlife in the Anthropocene*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. [Introduction, 20 pages]

Mittman, Gregg, Marco Armiero and Robert Emmett (eds). 2018. *Future Remains*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. [Preface plus one chapter of your choice, circa 15 pages].

Schuppli, Susan. 2010. "The most dangerous film in the world" in LeRoy et al (eds), *Tickle Your Catastrophe*. Ghent: Ghent University Press, 130-145. [15 pages]

Exercise

Present and discuss. In your group, choose one chapter from *Future Remains* book and prepare a presentation about it (and the object it describes) for the rest of the class. The presentation should be no more than 8 to 10 minutes.

12. Crisis Mar 24

The future of nature. What is the problem, what is to be done?

Core readings

Heise, Ursula, Jon Christensen and Michelle Niemann (eds). *Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. New York: Routledge. [Introduction, 10 pages]

Manifestos:

Asafu-Adjaye et al, *An Ecomodernist Manifesto* [30 pages]

Cuboniks, Laboria. *Xenofeminist Manifesto* [10 pages]

Extinction Rebellion. *This is not a Drill* ["Declaration of Rebellion", 2 pages]

Haraway, Donna. *Companion Species Manifesto* [first 25 pages]

Thunberg, Greta. *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference* [30 pages]

"The Anthropocene in Chile" [10 pages]

Exercise

Present and discuss. In your group, choose one of the selected manifestos [or two, if very short] and prepare a presentation about it to the rest of the class. The presentation should be no more than 8 to 10 minutes and include a summary of the manifesto, plus a discussion of "nature" as it appears in the text.

13. Wrap-up Mar 27

Discuss assessment. Questions. Feedback on the course. Further follow-up.

Core readings

Vandermeer, Jeff. 2014. *Annihilation*. New York: Farar, Straus and Giroux.

Weisman, Alan. 2007. *The World Without Us*. New York: St Martin's Press.