

Contemporary Critical Issues

To Be or Not Be: Aesthetics In The Age of Extinction(s)



The end of the human race will be that it will eventually die of civilization.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Becoming is really a process of un-becoming...undoing the givenness of the given.

Elizabeth Grosz - *Becoming Undone*

Like Hamlet, we are caught between between ruins and ghosts, where dark ecologies and a world without us teaches as to die, perchance to dream, and un-become. The pre-fix “un” will be our dis-locative wave point as we uncover the aesthetics of extinction(s). Extinctions have come before us, extinctions are us, and extinctions will be coming after we are all gone. Our aesthetic condition loops between Kant’s sublime after the death of god, Foucault’s genealogies of the death man, and Anthropocene’s geo-aesthetics of the death of world(s). Our critical aesthetic will no longer seek to create worlds, but unmake worlds; no longer seek acceleration, but escape; no longer try to gather assemblages but instead seek un-becomings; we will be mapping the futures to be found in the melting permafrost and how our technologies call us into our abyss. We will

attempt to conspire between the un-fold-ments of the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, and the Chthulhocene. We will read sections from Art in the Anthropocene edited by Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, Becoming Undone by Elizabeth Grosz, The Three Ecologies by Felix Guattari, and Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials by Reza Negarestani. We will also consider art works, narratives, gestures and popular works that can help us un-frame the aesthetics of extinctions around us, within us, and at the end(s) of uncivilization. All them leading us to a single question: What is to be un-done now?

Professor: Ricardo Dominguez .

Room: VAF 366 Tuesdays: 12: 30 pm – 3:20 pm

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Office Hours: MON. 11 to Noon (VAF 551 2nd Fl)

Grading Policies and Evaluation:

25% Attendance, Participation and Presentation

25% Leading Discussion

25% 1 Project Exhibition

25% Paper (One 10 page MLA style).

You will be expected to attend every class. If you have more than 2 unexcused absences, your final grade will drop a letter grade and 1/2 a letter for every additional unexcused absence that comes after. Two unexcused lateness will be considered an absence.

Schedule of Classes, Readings and Films:

Start Reading: Art in the Anthropocene

http://openhumanitiespress.org/books/download/Davis-Turpin_2015_Art-in-the-Anthropocene.pdf

Start Watching: *Fortitude* (2015) – 12 Episodes

CLASS 1 – September 27th – What sort of Species Are We, or Who Put the Scene in Anthropicene

The Anthropocene describes the idea of a new geological epoch distinguished by the geological scale of human impacts on the Earth's surface, atmosphere, oceans, and systems of nutrient cycling. Other organisms, like the cyanobacteria that oxygenated the atmosphere two billion years ago, have disrupted earth systems. But what does it mean, to be “the first species that's become a planet-scale influence and is aware of that reality?” How do we make sense of this? Does our status as a world-altering species evoke hubris or humility? And what does the shift from the predictable and habitable climate of the Holocene to the climate instability of the Anthropocene mean?

Watch In Class: *Soylent Green* (1973) by Richard Fleischer

Read:

[The Anthropocene: The Promise and Pitfalls of an Epochal Idea](#),” (Rob Nixon, Edge Effects)

“[The Anthropocene: a new epoch of geological time?](#)” (Jan Zalasiewicz et al., Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A, 369: 835-841, 2011)

“[The Anthropocene: conceptual and historical perspectives](#)” (Steffen et al., Phil. Trans. R. Soc. A, 369: 842–867, 2011)

Watch: [In Search of the Anthropocene](#) (BBC, 7:08 video)

CLASS 2 – The Three Ecologies

Read: *The Three Ecologies* by Felix Guattari

https://monoskop.org/images/4/44/Guattari_Felix_The_Three_Ecologies.pdf

Watch: *Silent Running* (1972) by Douglas Trumbull

CLASS 3 - October 11th – Unbecoming Humans (Homogenocene)

Read: “Inhuman in the Humanities in Humanities: Darwin and the Ends of Man” in *Becoming Undone* by Elizabeth Grosz

“[The Inhuman Anthropocene](#),” (Dana Luciano, Avidly)

Watch: *Phase IV* (1974) by Saul Bass

CLASS 4 - October 18th – NO CLASS - Uncivilization, Climbing the Dark Mountain

Read: Uncivilization: Dark Mountain Manifesto

<http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/>

Visit: *Black Haunts the Anthropocene* (a digital essay) by Marisa Parham

<http://blackhaunts.mp285.com/>

The essay is motivated by a sense that our contemporary consciousness of the anthropocene is in itself a media effect, explores how contemporary cultural, political, and scientific notions of the ‘anthropocene’ cohere with matters of temporality in recent black literature and culture.

Watch: *Melancholia* (2011) by Lars von Trier

CLASS 5 - October 25th – The Rise of Chthulhocene

Petroleum possesses tendencies for mass intoxication on pandemic scales (different from, but corresponding to capitalism's voodoo economy and other types of global possession systems). Petroleum is able to gather the necessary geo-political undercurrents (subterranean or blobjective narrations of politics, economy, religion, etc.) required for the process of Erathication or the moving of the Earth's body toward the Tellurian Omega – the utter degradation of the Earth as a Whole.

Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials by Reza Negarestani
https://monoskop.org/images/9/9c/Negarestani_Reza_Cyclonopedia_Complicity_with_Anonymous_Materials.pdf

Watch: *Mad Max: Fury Road* by George Miller (1981)

Watch: *Black Sea Files*: A video by Ursula Biemann (synch 2-channel, 43 min. 2005) on the Caspian oil geography and the gigantic new pipeline that pumps crude oil through the Caucasus (BTC)
<http://www.geobodies.org/art-and-videos/black-sea-files>

CLASS 6 – November 1st – Tellurian Insurgencies Against The Sun

Continue Reading: *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*
https://monoskop.org/images/9/9c/Negarestani_Reza_Cyclonopedia_Complicity_with_Anonymous_Materials.pdf

Look at the work of Pinar Yoldas:
<http://pinaryoldas.info/Ecosystem-of-Excess-2014>

Watch: *Dune* (1984) by David Lynch

CLASS 8 - November 15th – Tentacularocene

Read: Read: “Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene” by Donna Haraway
<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/>

Watch: *Donna Haraway: Making String Figures with Biologies, Arts, Activisms*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHwZA9NGWg0>

CLASS 9 - November 22nd – Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene

Read: “Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene” by Roy Scranton

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/11/10/learning-how-to-die-in-the-anthropocene/>

Read: *Tentacles Longer Than Night* by Eugene Thackers

<http://repeaterbooks.com/uncategorized/exclusive-extract-from-tentacles-longer-than-night-vol-3-of-eugene-thackers-horror-of-philosophy-series/>

Watch: *In the Time of the Wolf* by Michael Haneke (2003)

CLASS 10 – November 29th - The Anthroscene, of (Toxicities ‘R Us)

Read: “It’s Not The Anthropocene, It’s The White Supremacy Scene, Or, The Geological Color Line.” by Nicholas Mirzoeff (2016)

Read: “Conversation with Jussi Parikka: On A Geology of Media and New Materialism”

https://www.academia.edu/17981656/_A_Geology_of_Media_and_New_Materialism._Jussi_Parikka_in_conversation_with_Annika_Richterich_

Watch: 15 most toxic places on earth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eqXoUOeS6jg>

CLASS 11 - December 6 – Hyperobjects

Read: *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology at the End of the World* by Timothy Morton

<http://massivelyinvisibleobjects.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Hyperobjects.pdf>

CLASS 13 - December 14th -

Group Exhibition

More Resources:

On An Unground Earth by Ben Woodard

https://monoskop.org/images/9/90/Woodward_Ben_On_an_Ungrounded_Earth_Towards_a_New_Geophilosophy.pdf

HKW Anthropocene

<https://www.youtube.com/user/HKWanthropocene/videos>

The Hellstrom Chronicle (1971)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R8UN9zGD04>

Aesthetics of the Anthropocene

<http://sites.fhi.duke.edu/anthropocene/>