Updated 3/26

GESM 130G Seminar in Social Analysis
Course ID #35433 Spring 2018

Environment and Society:
Approaches to Nature, Culture, and Technology in the Anthropocene

Instructor
Elaine Gan, PhD
Mellon Fellow, Digital Humanities
USC Anthropology Department
Email: elaine.gan@usc.edu

Class Times
Mon & Wed 3:30-4:50pm
Leavey Library 3V

Office hours
Mon 10:00-11:30am
KAP348G

Course description
Anthropocene is a new term that describes our present epoch: an age in which globalization, industrial activity, and human disturbance have forged a distinctively new and life-threatening crust throughout the planet. The engines of progress have bulldozed and outpaced earth systems and evolutionary cycles to the edge of collapse and extinction. Effects of human activity are everywhere, challenging how we study nature, culture, and technology. This seminar introduces students to key texts and approaches to living in a more-than-human world that is undergoing rapid climate change and greater connectivity.

The seminar is organized around four subjects: I. Anthropocene; II. Plants, Fungi, and Food; III. Animals, Insects, and War; IV. Infrastructure and Waste. Readings and discussions will immerse students in methods of social analysis that thread through the fields of cultural anthropology, environmental studies, biology, science and technology studies, geography, food studies, literature, film and media studies. Methods range from ethnography, interviews, observation, data collection, field notes and strategies, library research, and documentation. Students will learn to think critically about the kinds of figures, descriptions, and analyses they encounter in the texts; compare different methods used; and experiment with various applications in everyday life.

Learning objectives
This general education seminar will cultivate students' abilities to:

(1) Understand interdisciplinary approaches to nature, culture, and technology in emerging Anthropocene discourse through a combination of readings and field observations.
(2) Apply methods of social analysis to the study of more-than-human socialities, or entanglements of humans, nonhumans, and machines that shape local/global politics, economics, and ecosystems.

(3) Analyze uses of and tensions between observation or empirical evidence; description or documentation; and analysis or theory.

(4) Engage questions of ethical responsibility, sociopolitical action, environmental justice, and collective survival or livabilities shared across difference.

**REQUIREMENTS & GRADING**

This is a reading- and writing-intensive seminar. Students are expected to read all assigned materials and participate actively in class discussions. Students will submit written responses around a key concept each week; write a mid-term essay; and develop a research question for a final paper that demonstrates an understanding of topics, experience in field observation and library research, and a capacity for critical thinking.

Grades will reflect how students meet class learning objectives:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Learning Objectives Assessed</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation in class discussions</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 weekly written responses: one paragraph (250 words) defining a key concept from the week's readings; <strong>due every Wednesday at class</strong></td>
<td>1, 3</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term essay: 6-page paper; <strong>due on Wednesday, March 7 at class</strong></td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final essay: 12-page paper around a research question developed through collaborative fieldwork; <strong>due on Friday, May 4 by 5pm</strong></td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website for DSP and
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

COURSE READINGS

Three books are REQUIRED and available for purchase at USC Bookstore. Students are required to bring the book to class on dates specified on the weekly schedule.


The following book has been ordered for the class but is OPTIONAL.


Other assigned readings are available at USC Libraries (e-books via online access) or as pdfs on the class website. Students are required to bring the pdf, print or digital version, to class on dates specified.
### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### Part I. Anthropocene: Extinction and Acceleration

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Submit:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Introductions and Course Overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/15</td>
<td><em>holiday, no class</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>Kolbert. Chapters 2-5 (pp. 23-110).</td>
<td>weekly response #1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1/22</td>
<td>Kolbert. Chapters 6-8, 10, 13 (pp. 111-172; 193-216; 259-269).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/29</td>
<td>McNeill and Engelke. Chapter 3 and Conclusion (pp. 103-154; 207-11).</td>
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#### Part II. Plants, Fungi, and Food

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Submit:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/7</td>
<td>Mintz. Chapter 2 (pp. 19-73).</td>
<td>weekly response #4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/12</td>
<td>Mintz. Chapter 3 (pp. 74-150).</td>
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<td>2/19</td>
<td><em>holiday, no class</em></td>
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2/21 Wed  NO CLASS MEETING
Read to prepare for field visit:
https://www.luminoso.org/site/books/10.1525/luminos.21/
Friends of LA River: https://folar.org/river-experiences/frog-spot/
submit: weekly response #6

2/25 Sun  MEET at FROG SPOT, LA River
Friends of LA River Visitor Center
2825 Benedict Street, Los Angeles 90039

Introduction and Chapter 1 (pp. 1-30).
USC Library e-book

2/28 Wed  Carney. Chapter 2 (pp. 31-68).
submit: weekly response #7
submit: group description of field site, 1 page

Part III. Animals, Insects, and War


3/7 Wed  Bird Rose, Deborah. "Multispecies Knots of Ethical Time."
DUE MARCH 7 at class: MID-TERM ESSAY, 6 pages

SPRING BREAK

USC Library e-book

3/21 Wed  Haraway. Chapter 10 (pp. 265-274).
USC Library e-book
submit: weekly response #8

USC Library e-book
https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-3427439
submit: weekly response #9
submit: notes from field site, 2 pages

Part IV. Infrastructure and Waste

SCHEDULE INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS to discuss your final research paper.

4/2 Mon  Carson, Rachel. Silent Spring. Please use the pdf that I uploaded to the "Content" folder for this class. Read/skim the entire book.

Accumulation: Material Politics of Plastic. edited by Jennifer Gabrys, Gay Hawkins, and Mike Michael. Chapter 12 (pp. 208-224)
submit: weekly response #10

Modernity and Technology. pp. 185-225.

4/11 Wed  WATCH documentary: Cadillac Desert 1 hour 24 minutes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpaC4R6cU1o
submit: weekly response #11

USC Library e-book

USC Library e-book
submit: weekly response #12

4/23 Mon  NO CLASS MEETING: work on final research papers.


5/4 FRI  DUE MAY 4 by 5PM: FINAL PAPER, 12 pages

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