

CTCS 677:

Cultural Theories – Media, Environment, and Capitalism



Professor Pringle

Tuesdays 2:00 – 5:50pm

SCA 216



This seminar centers the analysis of media in cultural theories that examine the relationship between environmental crises and capitalism. Climate change is mediated by models of the future and data visualizations that have become crucial to petrochemical finance portfolios. Humanitarian NGOs advocate smartphone and drone use in postcolonial contexts to treat agroecological problems while digital platforms entrench debt economies. Nuclear energy is advertised as a solution to global heating that would preserve capitalist modernity, while the wastelands of uranium extraction occupy Indigenous territory. Anthropocene nature documentaries privilege universalism in the bird's-eye-view aestheticization of waste. In each case, media play a pivotal role in establishing what is, and what isn't, "sustainable" about capitalism. This seminar conceptualizes mediation as a cultural site negotiating what an environment is and what is valuable about that environment. Grounded in the environmental humanities, readings may include work by Ian Baucom, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Melinda Cooper, William Cronon, Iyko Day, Yuriko Furuhashi, Max Liboiron, Andreas Malm, Michelle Murphy, Christina Sharpe, Anna Tsing, and McKenzie Wark.