



School of Art and Design

**ART 499: Speculative Ecologies: Art, Water, and Sustainability**

**Units:** 2

**Spring 2025 (including Spring Break intensive)**

**Location:** Downtown Los Angeles

**Instructors:** Suzanne Lacy and Lauren Bon

**Office:** Online or Mateo Grad Building

**Office Hours:** by appointment

**Contact Info:** [lacys@usc.edu](mailto:lacys@usc.edu), [laurenmetropolis@gmail.com](mailto:laurenmetropolis@gmail.com)

**Adobe Help:** Nikhil Murthy

**Hours of Service:** 10-5 m-f

**Contact Info:** [nmurthy@usc.edu](mailto:nmurthy@usc.edu)

[roskihelpdesk@usc.edu](mailto:roskihelpdesk@usc.edu)

**IT Help: ITS Customer Support Center**

**Hours of Service:** 24 hours per day, 7 days per week; Telephone: 213-821-1414

**Email support:** [consult@usc.edu](mailto:consult@usc.edu)

**Hours for email support:** Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm **Contact Info:** Hayk Avetisyan,

[havetisy@usc.edu](mailto:havetisy@usc.edu) 213-740-5555, ext. 11414

**Course Description:**

Artists skills are particularly useful to planners and builders in imagining the future in new and creative ways. In this course students from various disciplines will work in groups to creatively address problems of ecological and social sustainability in and around the LA River. This intensive six day workshop over the 2024 Spring Break will take place in the Metabolic Studio, immediately adjacent to the L.A. River site of a monumental speculative ecology artwork, *Bending the River*, by artist and faculty member Lauren Bon.

Speculative ecology is a discipline that focuses on creating hypothetical or "what-if" scenarios for ecological systems. The Metabolic Studio has brought an artists' voice to a state-level conversation about the responsibility of creative practice to shift the narrative about our common resources like water, the air we breathe, our labor and our topsoil. Taking Bon's work as reference, the students will spend 6 days in creative work teams exploring sites on the LA River and relationships between ecology, community, water, and social practice art.

We welcome upper division and graduate creatives from all schools for an interdisciplinary experience in social practice and ecological art, terms that describe intersectional creative productions relevant to many disciplines.

**Teachers:** Taught by Professor Suzanne Lacy, social practice artist and writer, and Lauren Bon, artist, director of Metabolic Studio, and creator of the "Bending the River Project"  
Metabolic Studio <https://metabolicstudio.org>  
Suzanne Lacy: <https://suzannelacy.com>

**Learning Objectives**

Describe how the Los Angeles River functions within the context of federal, state and local dialogues that are both topical and pertinent to the climate and extinction crisis.

Describe how ongoing durational art practices intersecting with ecological sciences and the socio-political sphere can generate a deeper understanding of our shared responsibilities to the public sphere.

Work collaboratively to produce discussions and a final creative presentation with/for the class.

**Prerequisites** Upper division or Graduate Status, any discipline

## **Assignments:**

### Daily Journal

Record observations, questions, and questions on readings in your journal each day. You will be required to show this to the instructor, and it will be relevant for your final project. At the end of the session, you will be required to present a short reflection of your learnings.

### Collaboration and Citizenship

You will be graded on your demeanor of respect for your classmates, willingness to carry your share of the workload and clean up, and ability to participate equally with team members.

### Discussions

You will be graded on your ability to actively engage with each other and the faculty.

### Final Project

Your final speculative ecology project, presented as a team, should include visual material and text, and be presented orally as a power point and as a printed proposal.

## **Grading Breakdown**

10%	Participation, including timeliness, cleaning up, and other citizenship attributes
20%	Daily Journal
20%	Oral presentation
50%	<u>Written Project</u>
100%	Total

## **Assessment:**

Grading Scale: A indicates work of excellent quality; B of good quality; C of average quality; D of below average quality; and F indicates inadequate work. NOTE: THERE ARE NO EXTENSIONS FOR ASSIGNMENTS EXCEPT FOR FAMILY / HEALTH EMERGENCIES, in which case a medical certificate must be presented

## **Grading Scale**

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82

## **Attendance and Late Policy**

Students are expected to attend all sessions unless they have a medical reason not to. Tardiness for meetings will impact your grade. Given that this is an intensive course, missing a single day will impact severely on your grade.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change)**

### **It is important to understand the unusual scheduling nature of this class.**

This is a semester long class with the bulk of the schedule taking place during Spring Break. Because we anticipate students from different programs and schools, we have left the timing of our first two sessions to be determined via a doodle poll with all enrolled students. We will contact you before the first week of school to determine a good date to meet during these prior sessions

#### **1. We will have two sessions prior to spring break**

- TBD Week of January 13 - Tour of Metabolic Studio
- TBD Week of March 3 - Getting ready for the class workshop on Zoom

*These sessions will be determined by the entire group voting on a two hour time block that works for their schedules.*

#### **2. The bulk of the class takes place over Spring Break:**

- Friday, 3/14/2025 (Friday) - 6:00-9:00 pm
- Saturday 3/15- 9:30 am-6:00 pm
- Sunday - 9:30 am-6:00 pm
- Monday- 9:30 am-6:00 pm
- Tuesday - 9:30 am-6:00 pm
- Wednesday- 9:30 am-6:00 pm
- Thursday - 9:30 am-6:00 pm

*There will be no absences allowed this week as we will be in intensive work with production teams. Your absence will penalize your work group. If you cannot schedule the entire week please don't take this class.*

#### **3. We will have final reflection session:**

- TBD Week of April 21

*This session will be determined by the entire group voting on a two hour time block that works for their schedules.*

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### 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](https://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, [policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

### Student Conduct Code

<https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/> 11.12

A. Acquisition of term papers or other assignments from any source and the subsequent presentation of those materials as the student's own work or providing term papers or assignments that another student submits as their own work.

B. Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

C. Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class. Recording can inhibit future free discussion and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor.

### Equity Statement

By registering for this course, you are agreeing to a social contract. We recognize that in order to establish the conditions by which we will collectively and individually develop a practice of freedom, we must leave our preconceptions and biases outside of the classroom. Confronting and undoing the work of oppressive indoctrination requires us to unlearn and *relearn* modes of thought and existence in a space of generosity, support, and mutuality.

Every member of this class has the right to freedom of discrimination pertaining to citizenship, race, ancestry, ethnicity, cultural expression, class, disability, place of origin, skin color, religious belief, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, record of offenses, marital status, and family status. This applies to all areas of shared space and related classroom activities including interactions with faculty, visitors, colleagues, and the class as a whole. By registering for this course, you acknowledge that you will be an active and engaged member of this community. You consent to uphold, and when appropriate, advocate for the practice and maintenance of this freedom.

### Support Systems:

*Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 - 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling)

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 - 24/7 on call*  
[suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours - 24/7 on call*  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](http://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX - (213) 821-8298*  
[equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu), [titleix.usc.edu](http://titleix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

*Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](http://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776*  
[dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

*USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 821-4710*  
[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

*Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101*  
[diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and resources for students.

*USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 - 24/7 on call*  
[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

*USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 - 24/7 on call*  
[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu) Non-emergency assistance or information.

*Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)*  
[ombuds.usc.edu](http://ombuds.usc.edu) A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University  
Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.