

This syllabus is your guide to the course. Keep it close and refer to it often. Most questions can probably be answered by consulting it. Continued enrollment in the course means you understand and agree to the terms, policies, and assignment information explained here.

ENVS 411: Cultures of Oil, Cultures of Climate Change

TR 2:00-3:50; Col 142

Instructor: Taylor McHolm

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Office Hours: 102 PLC – Tuesdays 4-5:30; Thursdays 11-12:30 or by appointment

Course Description and Overview

Imagination has material consequences. The root causes of climate change derive from a set of cultural values and understandings. These values and understandings are produced and reproduced, in part, by the tremendous capacity of petroleum. Oil's undeniable power has not only made possible most of the elements of mainstream American culture, it has produced the conditions of anthropogenic climate change. But how do we see petroleum? How do we *experience* climate change? The hard sciences have contributed invaluable data and resources to help us understand these processes, but is this the same thing as “knowing” them? As experiencing them? Can we expect a solution from the same ways of thinking and acting that have produced the problem in the first place? To answer these questions, we must turn to an understanding of culture.

This course investigates the cultural values, representations, understandings and material manifestations of oil and climate change. Throughout this course, we will take a multi-disciplinary approach to consider what the humanities can add to the important conversations about understanding climate change and the culture of oil that has produced it.

Overall, this course will ask you to use the tools you've collected from your time as an Environmental Studies or Sciences major, drawing on backgrounds in the sciences, social sciences and humanities. We will begin our course with an overview of “petroculture.” From this foundation, we will begin to explore how the arts and culture have produced, and then responded to, a culture made possible by cheap and available oil. Throughout the course, we'll be looking at the various ways that literature (including novels, graphic novels, poetry and short stories), visual media (including photography, film, sculpture and activist art) and perhaps even games have been enabled by and respond to oil and climate change. Your final project will be your own response: a creative work that draws on your understanding of the issue and offers an opportunity to spread this understanding to others or inspire solutions to our current environmental crisis. This will be accompanied by an in-depth critical evaluation or “artists' statement” that explains the contexts and intended impact of your work (or proposed work – see description below).

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to build off of your training in ENVS thus far and help you learn key concepts and skills in cultural studies to help you engage climate change and petroculture in meaningful, transformative ways. If you invest yourself fully, by the end of the course you will be able to:

- Identify ways in which imaginative and representational works influence or challenge understandings of petroculture and climate change;
- Analyze how cultural forms create and impact values and feelings towards petroleum and climate change;
- Determine how categories of identity – such as race, gender, class, and sexuality – impact environmental values and exposure to the processes of climate change;
- Read, summarize, and analyze complex cultural “texts” with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions—both formal and stylistic;
- Draw on relevant political, historical, and scientific information to situate cultural texts within wider debates and discourses about climate change and petroleum;
- Reflect on and critically analyze your own understandings of and feelings about petroleum, climate change and the future;
- Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce persuasive and imaginative arguments about culture, climate change and oil.

Required Texts

The following texts are required for this course and available through the DuckStore. All other readings listed on the schedule will be posted on our course blog site.

- Duin, Steve and Shannon Wheeler. *Oil and Water*.
- Rich, Nathaniel. *Odds Against Tomorrow*.

EXPECTATIONS OF YOU

Disclaimer 1:

All literatures, texts and cultural productions, including those about the environment, depict aspects of social reality—violence, discrimination, conflict, sex, etc. You may find these disturbing. Some of the texts depict social, political, religious or other kinds of views that may be different from your own. In this class we will deal directly with issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as they are presented in the text(s). **If you are unwilling to discuss such readings thoroughly and/or unable to discuss such readings respectfully, you should consider your enrollment in this course.**

Disclaimer 2:

This course is primarily a discussion course, rather than a lecture course. If you come away from the term only knowing what the instructor thinks about the materials, then your time has been wasted. Instead, the goal of this course is for you to come to your own conclusions and ideas through discussion and writing. It is therefore critical that you attend class and that you come to class prepared and actively participate.

Blog and Canvas:

Course blog: <http://blogs.uoregon.edu/envs411oil/>

This course will use both Canvas and a course blog. The course blog will be populated with user-generated content described in the assignment explanation section below and is a major component of the class. It also houses all of our course materials and links (with the exception of the two novels).

The course will use Canvas as a place to post grades and make announcements to the whole class via email.

IMPORTANT NOTE: For both Canvas and the blog, it is important that to ensure that your preferred name matches the displayed name. You cannot change your name in Canvas itself; rather, Canvas pulls the name it displays from your preferred name, which you can set via Duckweb. You can change your displayed name for the course blog by clicking on your name and selecting “Edit Profile.” If you have questions or concerns about this, please let me know or contact CMET to assist you.

Reading: The reading has been selected to be manageable, but it has also been chosen because of its importance. There is no “filler” reading or texts that we will not get to in class. You must be prepared in each class. Courses like this one excel because of the discussion and ideas that each individual brings to the course. That means that we are all responsible for producing the knowledge learned over our time together. Not doing the reading means that you will not be able to produce such knowledge, which puts you in the un-enviable position of simply relying on other people to do the work for you and produce that knowledge. Don’t be the roommate that empties the fridge and never fills it.

It is strongly recommended that you print the readings. I love and use a wide variety of technology, and I understand the ease of reading things on your computer, especially when they are posted for free. That said, I also believe that we read differently on the computer than we do from paper. We tend to skim more and do less in-depth critical reading. For example, consider how much of this syllabus you would have read if I emailed it to you . . .

Prerequisites: Though there are no official prerequisites for the course, students who have not successfully completed the 200 series intro to the major courses might be at a disadvantage. The course assumes a general knowledge of environmental and social processes as well as a general familiarity with the methodology of textual analysis and cultural studies one would get through ENV5 203. If you have not yet completed these courses or do not feel you have a strong foundation, please meet with me during week one.

Attendance and Participation: This course will be very student-driven and will include many opportunities for active engagement. You are therefore expected to participate actively, which includes attending and participating, reading all assigned material prior to class, completing assignments, using office hours when necessary, and contributing helpfully in discussion. The best way to understand the topics we will engage is to talk about them with

each other, so please feel free to contribute any question, objection, or other thought about the topic at hand when such occurs to you. Although no relevant remark is out of bounds in this class, you will be expected to treat all members of the class with courtesy and respect.

You must be an active and contributing member in class. Attendance is essential. You may miss two classes without penalty. Each additional absence will result in a 1/3 reduction of your final grade. Because of the nature of the course and it's timeline, it will simply not be possible to do well without being present and prepared to engage.

We are all human and live human lives (presumably). I understand that things happen in life when we wish they didn't. Early and frequent communication is a wonderful thing. I'm not an unfeeling person, but I need to know what's going on in order to best make accommodations.

EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK – all work due at the beginning of class unless otherwise noted

Assignments		
Petro-Biography	<i>Due: Thursday, Oct. 15</i>	15%
Blogging	<i>Due: Check Syllabus Weekly</i>	20%
Midterm	<i>in class Thursday, Oct. 22</i>	15%
Discussion Leadership	<i>Throughout the quarter</i>	10%
Discussion Provocateurs	<i>Throughout the quarter</i>	
Hearts and Minds Final Project	<i>Proof of concept due: 11/7</i>	30%
project/proposal	10%	
context and critical rationale essay	4-5 pp 15%	
presentation	5-7minutes 5%	
Final pin-up presentation:	12/8	
Attendance and participation		10%

ASSIGNMENT EXPLANATIONS

Note on Late assignments: All assignments are due at the beginning of the class listed on the syllabus. Each calendar day an assignment is late will reduce the assignment's grade by 10%. Remember: early and frequent communication is essential and helps alleviate a lot of problems.

Personal Petro-Biography: What is the role of petroleum in your life? Antonio Gramsci, an Italian theorist and philosopher, once said, "The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory." This assignments asks you to make an inventory of oil in your life and to consider what it would mean to "know thyself" in relation to oil. This assignment will be the foundation for our understanding of petroleum in our lives as we move forward in the course. It is largely personal and narrative, but you are free to draw on academic sources that have motivated or moved you if you'd like.

Check the full assignment description on our course blog.

Blog Posts: Over the course of the term, you will write blog posts that explain your engagement with the reading for that week. Most of the time, they will be spurred by specific prompts or guidelines given ahead of time. The blog is a way to connect with each other and the greater world (if we'd like) as we struggle to make sense of petroculture and climate change. The response should critically engage what we've read or interacted with for the week, but this is also meant to be an experimental place where you try out ideas. This means that there should be an attempt to understand, explicate or apply the ideas/content of the week by putting them in conversation with other things we've read/encountered or with other things that you experience beyond the class.

Check the full assignment description on our course blog.

Group Discussion Leadership: You will be responsible for somewhat formally leading discussion of our readings. This DOES NOT MEAN that you have to know everything there is to know about a topic. What it DOES mean is that you'll need to come with an overview of the major points of the text. You will also give a "reading" of the text (your argument about it) and demonstrate possible ways to connect or think about the text/reading(s) that we may not have thought about. You will then facilitate the discussion (I'll help, too) about the reading based on these questions or others that come up.

Discussion Provocateurs: For each presentation given by the group, a handful of students will be “provocateurs,” or people who provoke discussion by carefully and thoughtfully posing insightful questions in response to the reading/argument given by the discussion leaders. The role of the provocateur is just a more formal version of what we should all be doing: being critically engaged and investigating thought. Provocateurs are simply the folks who will get the discussion going. The rest of the class will then fill in to respond to both the discussion leaders and the provocateurs.

Hearts And Minds Final Project: Project/Proposal accompanied by 4-5 page critical rationale

In lieu of a final exam, you will be undertaking a creative project as a response to the ideas and frustrations we’ve uncovered related to petroculture and climate change. You are strongly encouraged to carry out this project to the extent that you are able. Dream big. Being aware of the short period of our course, however, it may only be possible to write a proposal for this project or do a small mock-up of a larger idea. In this case, the proposal should be in depth and reflective of effort commensurate with actually carrying out a smaller project. Throughout the course, we will be evaluating the ways in which cultural representation can impact environmental values, imagine possible solutions to oil and climate change problems, or make these issues more clearly understood (either emotionally or intellectually). Your project will attempt to do this.

Accompanying this project will be your rationale, which is an explanation of how your work accomplishes one or some of these things. You will need to explain your choice in content, your choice in medium, the argument that you’re trying to make, the reason why you feel this issue needs to be addressed, your goals for the project and why you think that this is the best way to address the problem. Additionally, you will explicitly put your project in conversation with at least 2 critical works that we’ve read this quarter and explain how your project addresses the ideas or concerns raised by these pieces.

These creative projects will not be evaluated on how technically proficient they are (how much your painted polar bear looks like a “real” polar bear, for example), but rather how they imagine and carry out your artistic goals. In this regard, the written rationale will be just as important as the creative work, and perhaps slightly more so. Technical proficiency with a medium is not our primary concern, as this requires more time to develop than we have. Imaginative responses, however, are quicker to conceptualize, though they should be well thought-out. The command of the issue, its context and the critical environment into which your project is entered will be the primary area of evaluation. More specific details will be provided.

On the day of the final, we’ll split the class and time in two. The first hour, half the class will pin-up their works/projects/proposals, and the other half of the class will move from person to person engaging the work and hearing the explanation. Then, we’ll switch and the roles will be reversed.

COURSE POLICIES – *please read carefully!*

Completion of Assignments: All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Early and frequent communication is a wonderful thing. Knowing what’s going on is the only way I can best make accommodations.

Copies of Assignments: Please retain the original copy of all work returned to you during the term until the final course grade has been posted. In the event of any question concerning whether grades have been accurately recorded, it is your responsibility to provide these original copies as documentation.

Late Work: Late work will incur a 10% grade reduction for each calendar day past the original due date. As is always the case, clear, frequent and early communication solves a lot of problems.

Course Blog: Assignments, resources and most of the “work” we do will be through our course blog. After the syllabus, it’s the first place to go for information. Hopefully, it will turn into a robust and thoughtful space where ideas are shared.

Canvas: This class will use Canvas as our gradebook. I will also make important announcements and post grades through the course’s Canvas site. If you are not comfortable with the site, you should spend some time familiarizing yourself with its content, navigation, and features.

Formatting of Papers: All papers written for this course must be submitted in MLA format, double-spaced, printed in 12-pt, Times New Roman font with regular, 1-inch margins on all sides. Papers with excessive spacing or

enlarged font will be penalized accordingly. An up-to-date MLA Handbook (or another writing manual with current MLA rules) is recommended. NOTE: Blog posts will be formatted automatically.

Electronics: If you have a computer you want to bring to class, feel free to bring it. We'll often make use of them to look at texts, images and other media. Note, however, that they generally won't be necessary. Distracting use of electronics (this means texting, facebooking, sportscentering, vining, snapchatting and whatever else the kids are doing these days) will count as an absence. To save everyone embarrassment and awkwardness, I will not call you out in the middle of class. Instead, I will silently make note of it and mark you absent; perhaps I will email you after class to tell you I've done so. Perhaps.

Everyone knows when someone isn't engaged because of electronics or otherwise. Please consider the message this sends when someone is talking, especially about the themes that we will be dealing with in this class.

Communication: Email is BY FAR the best way to communicate with me outside of class. Please put ENV5 411 in the subject. I'm generally very responsive, so if you don't receive a reply in two days, email me again . . . nicely. Or talk to me in class as soon as you can.

In kind, I will communicate with you through UO email and/or Canvas. You are expected to check both regularly. Welcome to the modern world.

A quick note on email etiquette: Grammar, punctuation, tone, complete sentences and appropriate greetings/salutations are not just "weird things" that people do in writing and communication. They have purpose. In addition to making your email more easily understandable, they demonstrate that you respect the person enough to take a few moments to ensure a certain level of pride and quality in your own correspondence. Generally speaking, the people that you're emailing at the university have devoted their lives to these subjects and are teaching these courses because they feel it is vital to understanding life and becoming a good human. If you're trying to get help from someone, it's normally a good idea to do it in a way that respects these views.

This applies to life outside of college courses, too.

Academic Integrity: The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Please contact me with any questions you have about academic conduct. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>

Academic misconduct will be met with disciplinary action (the usual punishment is an "F" for the course).

Inclusive Access: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please don't hesitate to contact me. It is especially important that you notify me within the first two weeks of the term if aspects of the instruction or course design present obstacles to your active participation or prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities. Such obstacles may include, but are not limited to issues concerning physical access and mobility, physical or mental health and well-being, and academic learning. I need to know about such issues so that we can discuss necessary approaches to ensure your full participation and facilitate your learning process. The university offers a wide range of services to support students in their efforts to learn and meet course requirements, including the following:

- *Accessible Education Center (AEC):* The AEC is dedicated to facilitating and supporting accessible education through active collaboration with students, faculty, staff, and the community. The AEC works to create and sustain physical, curricular, and informational environments that are informed by and response to the diverse characteristics and experiences of students with disabilities and variations of ability. Web:

<http://aec.uoregon.edu/> - Phone: 541-346-1155

- *University Counseling and Testing Center (UCTC)*: The UCTC provides comprehensive mental health care and testing services to the University of Oregon campus. The primary mission of the UCTC is to provide quality clinical/therapeutic services, psychological testing and assessment, psychoeducational workshops, and outreach as well as emergency services. Web: <http://counseling.uoregon.edu/dnn/> - Phone: 541-346-3227
- *Teaching and Learning Center (TLC)*: TLC provides numerous resources (including courses, workshop, tutoring, and math and writing labs) to help UO students succeed. They work with a diverse student body with a wide range of needs. If you are unsure which resources would work best, they are happy to answer questions and share suggestions. Web: <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/> - Phone: 541-346-3226

Diversity: The University of Oregon and I are dedicated to the principles of equal opportunity in education and an acceptance of diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community. Open inquiry, freedom of expression, and respect for difference are therefore fundamental to a comprehensive and dynamic education. This course is committed to upholding these ideals by encouraging the exploration, engagement, and expression of divergent perspectives and diverse identities. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel aspects of the instruction or course design, or classroom activities, undermine these principles in any way. You may also notify the ENVIS Program at 541-346-5954. For additional assistance and resources, I encourage you to contact the following campus services, as appropriate for your concerns:

- *Office of the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion*: The University of Oregon Office of the Vice President for Equity and Inclusion promotes inclusive excellence by working to ensure equitable access to opportunities, benefits, and resources for all faculty, administrators, students, and community members. We are a hub of information and a center for resources and expertise to support equity and diversity at the University. Our goal is to promote inclusive excellence through a commitment to institutional fairness and equality, eradication of discrimination, and by celebrating the strengths of a multicultural community. Web: <http://diversity.uoregon.edu/> - Phone: 346-3175
- *Bias Response Team (BRT)*: The BRT, based out of the Office of Student Life, works to gather information about bias incidents and to support those who unfortunately have witnessed, or themselves become a target, of an act of bias. The fundamental role of the BRT is to provide targets of bias a safe space to have their voices heard, to promote civility and respect, to effect change around these important issues in a quick and effective manner, and to ensure a comprehensive response to bias incidents. The BRT also functions to ensure the evaluation of policies and procedures. Web: http://bias.uoregon.edu - Phone: 541-346-1134

Tentative Course Assignment Schedule

Day	Reading	Due	
Foundations: What is Culture? Climate Change? Petro Culture?			
1	T 9/29	No reading. In class: The problem of Representation. Listen: Father John Misty, "Now I'm Learning to Love the War." Watch: "Newsroom" clip; "Petrolify"	In class: Sign-up for presentation leaders and provocateurs
	R 10/1	Kavanagh, J. "Ideology." Buell, F. "A Short History of Oil Cultures; or, the Marriage of Catastrophe and Exuberance"	Post 1: Complicity, Catastrophe, Exuberance and Ideology
A First Pass at Cultural Criticism			
2	T 10/6	Read: Marinetti, F.T., "The Futurist Manifesto" Start Reading: LeMenager, S. "The Aesthetics of Petroleum" In Class: <i>Mad Max: Fury Road</i> .	
	R 10/8	Read: LeMenager, S. "The Aesthetics of Petroleum"	Post 2: <i>Mad Max: Fury Road</i> Critical Response
Activist Art, non-Activist Art, Photography (I)			
3	T 10/13	Read: McKibben, B. "What the Warming World Needs Now is Art, Sweet Art." Read: Hartman, S. "Project Bifrost." Read: Colbert "Crossing the Line" Look/Read/Explore/Watch: Mosher, "High Water Line" Look/Read/Explore/Watch: DeMocker, "Condemned"	
	R 10/15	Read: Zuromskis, C. "Petroaesthetics and Landscape Photography: <i>New Topographics</i> , Edward Burtynsky and the Culture of Peak Oil." Look: Images from <i>New Topographics</i> ; Burtynsky's <i>Oil</i> ; Epstein's <i>American Power</i> ; Helbig, <i>Beautiful Destruction</i>	Personal Petro-Biography and Inventory Extra Credit Option: Steve Hartman of "Project Bifrost" is speaking on campus. Go and post your reactions to the blog
Photography (II), Understanding Comics, Graphic Novel (I)			
4	T 10/20	Benjamin, W. <i>from</i> "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" I-VII Watch: Burtynsky, E. "My Wish" TED talk 2005 Look/Read: Cariou, "Petrography"	
	R 10/22	Read: from McCloud, S. <i>Understanding Comics</i> Duin, S. and Wheeler, S. <i>Oil and Water</i> (stop reading at "FMK," which is halfway)	Post 3: Petro-Photo or Comic
Graphic Novel (II), Midterm			
5	T 10/27	Read: Duin, S. and Wheeler, S. <i>Oil and Water</i> ("FMK" to end)	
	R 10/29	<u>MIDTERM</u>	
Short Fiction and Poetry			
6	T 11/3	Read: Szeman, I. "Introduction to Focus: Petrofictions" Read/Look: Cariou, W. "Tarhands: A Messy Manifesto." Read: Cariou, W. "Athabasca Story."	
	R 11/5	Read: Siperstein, S. "Teaching Climate Change." "Berry Picking"	Post 4: Short-Fiction and Poetry

		Marhsall, L. "Prose Poem after a Hurricane." Gostomoski, "Grief and Change."	
7	Interactive Media		
	T 11/10	Play: Dufresne <i>Fort McMoney</i> Read/Watch: Eklund, <i>World Without Oil</i> Read/Listen: Eklund, Future Coasts	
	R 11/12	Play: Oiligarchy Play: Oil Apps – your choice Search the app store on whatever platform use us (iOS, Android, etc). Find and play a game (or two) about oil.	Post 5: Play on, Player
8	The Novel		
	T 11/17	Read: Eagleton, T. "What is the Novel?" Read: Rich, N. <i>Odds Against Tomorrow</i> (I)	Preliminary Proposal/Proof of Concept
	R 11/19	Read: Rich, N. <i>Odds Against Tomorrow</i> (II)	
9	The Novel, The Giving of Thanks		
	T 11/24	Read: Rich, N. <i>Odds Against Tomorrow</i> (III)	Post 6: A Novel Idea
	R 11/26	<u>Thanksgiving: NO CLASS</u>	
10	Running into Running out		
	T 12/1	Flex and Lab Day	
	R 12/4	Final Review and Reflection	
F	Final Pin-ups and Presentations 12:30, Tuesday, Dec. 8 142 Columbia		