

Transatlantic Environmental Humanities

Tu 10:10 am - 12:05 pm	Charlotte Melin	Daniel J. Philippon
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3 credits	320 Folwell Hall	21 Lind Hall
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Course Description

How can the humanities help interpret and address environmental problems? This team-taught course will explore this question in a transatlantic context, in partnership with the Rachel Carson Center (RCC) at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) in Munich. Graduate students from a wide range of disciplines are welcome. Students will:

- examine current methodological, conceptual, and disciplinary debates in the Environmental Humanities, particularly in a transatlantic context
- explore the idea of the Anthropocene from the perspectives of environmental literature, history, philosophy, and culture
- investigate the effects of globalization on German and European food cultures through case studies of sustainable food producers
- practice skills in the public humanities and digital humanities through partnerships with institutional archives, such as the Deutsches Museum in Munich, whose exhibition “Welcome to the Anthropocene: The Earth in Our Hands” is now on view
- engage leading figures in German and European studies, through guest lectures, on-campus visits, and workshops

Supported by the Center for German and European Studies in CLA and by a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), this course will also allow students to be in regular contact with students and faculty at LMU through common texts, invited speakers, and video chats. In addition, students will be eligible to receive travel stipends to visit Munich, attend events related to the environmental humanities, and meet and share their work with their counterparts at LMU. Students at LMU will likewise visit Minneapolis.

UMN Course: ENGL 8090 (Seminar in Special Subjects), section 2, class #32838; GER 8300 (Topics in Literature and Cultural Theory), section 2, class #33886

LMU Course: Sociology: Problems of Environmental Knowledge, team-taught by Dr. Bernhard Gill (Professor of Sociology) and Dr. Robert Emmett (Director of Academic Programs, RCC), Tuesdays, 4-7 pm Central European Time

Moodle site: <https://ay15.moodle.umn.edu/course/view.php?id=869>

Objectives

What questions will the course help you to answer? How will you grow in knowledge and understanding? What intellectual abilities will the course help you to develop?

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- understand transformations in higher education and environmental concerns in the humanities in a transatlantic context
- situate current Euro-American scholarship on the environment in terms of the history of environmental thought, political economy, social history
- analyze one or more primary texts from a transatlantic and/or global environmental perspective
- clarify your own position on the relationship of environmental theory and ethics/practice
- demonstrate skills and knowledge appropriate to your professional/disciplinary goals by completing a substantial project involving research, analysis, creative activity, and/or public practice
- collaborate with others to increase your knowledge and understanding
- communicate your ideas effectively in writing and in speaking

Texts

What reading materials will help you to pursue the goals of this course?

Most of our reading will take the form of recent articles and book chapters, which will be available on our Moodle site. Depending on student interest, we may add a book or two as the semester unfolds.

Grades

How will we evaluate the nature, quality, and progress of your learning?

We will award grades in this course according to the University of Minnesota's Uniform Grading Policy:

- A: achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B: achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
- C: achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect
- D: achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements
- F: represents failure and signifies that the work was either:
 - completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit, or
 - not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an "I" (Incomplete)

We will also award pluses and minuses, with the highest possible grade being an "A."

We will assign an "I" (Incomplete) only in extraordinary circumstances, such as hospitalization. An Incomplete requires a written agreement between us, and it will automatically become an "F" at the end of the next semester of your registration if you do not complete the course requirements by that time.

Students taking this course using the S-N option must complete all requirements, which will be graded using the A-F system. Students must earn a "C-" or better to receive an "S" (Satisfactory). Students earning a "D+" or worse will receive an "N" (No Credit). If you wish to change from the A-F grading system to the S-N system, or vice-versa, you must do so within the first two weeks of the semester. Note that only grades of A, B, C (including C-), and S may be applied to a Graduate School degree program.

Grades will be assigned in terms of a percentage of possible points according to the following standards:

	B+ >= 87%	C+ >= 77%	D+ >= 67%		
A >= 93%	B >= 83%	C >= 73%	D >= 63%	F < 63%	
A- >= 90%	B- >= 80%	C- >= 70%			

We may choose to grade more generously, but we will not raise our standards above these.

If at any time you have concerns about your grade, please do not hesitate to contact us. Overall, we would say we are "tough but fair" graders. We expect your work to be outstanding, and the way to get an "A" is to meet those expectations in every respect.

How to Calculate Your Grade

You can calculate your grade at any time by adding up all the points you received on your assignments to date and dividing that number by all the points you could have received on those assignments. (Grades for attendance and participation will not be calculated until the end of the semester.) We will also be posting grades to our Moodle site.

Credits and Workload Expectations

According to University policy, it is expected that the academic work required of graduate students will exceed three hours per credit per week.

University Resources

What University resources exist to help you succeed in this course?

Student Writing Support

Student Writing Support (SWS) offers free writing instruction for all University of Minnesota students—graduate and undergraduate—at all stages of the writing process. Consulting is available by appointment online and in Nicholson Hall, and on a walk-in basis in Appleby Hall. Phone: 612-625-1893. Web: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws>

Student Academic Success Services

University Counseling & Consulting Services (UCCS) offers learning support services, including classes, workshops, individual consultation and counseling, and study skills resources to help you be successful at the University. They have two Twin Cities campus locations: Minneapolis (340 Appleby Hall) and St. Paul (199 Coffey Hall). Phone: 612-624-3323. Web: <http://www.uccs.umn.edu/>

Student Mental Health and Stress Management

Many university services exist to help you address a range of mental health concerns or stressful events that may lead to diminished academic performance. These include strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. For more information on confidential mental health services, see: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/>

University Policies

What University policies apply to this course so that you will have a safe, productive, and fair environment for learning?

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment by or toward a member of the University community is prohibited by Board of Regents policy. Complaints about sexual harassment should be reported to the University's Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 419 Morrill Hall. <https://diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/>

Classroom Conduct

All students at the University have the right to a civil, productive, and stimulating learning environment. In turn, instructors have a responsibility to nurture and maintain such an environment. Lively, even heated, discussion is not disruptive behavior. Both instructors and students have a fundamental obligation to respect the rights of each other and an equally fundamental obligation to respect the instructional setting as a place for civil, courteous behavior. Students who disrupt the educational process because of discourteous, threatening, harassing, or other aggressive behavior will be removed from class.

Disability Accommodations

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. If you have a disability, please contact me and/or Disability Services (180 McNamara Alumni Center, 612-626-1333 TTY/voice) to schedule an appointment with a Specialist. All requests will remain confidential. This syllabus is available in alternative formats upon request. <https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/>

Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. Any student found guilty of scholastic dishonesty in this course can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course and be reported to the University's Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, please ask. <http://www.oscai.umn.edu>

Requirements

What will you be doing to pursue the goals of this course?

To succeed in this course, you must complete the following requirements, which are worth a total of 1,000 possible points. For more information on this point system, see the section on grades.

1. Attendance and Participation (100 points): The word “seminar” derives from the Latin *seminarium*, or “seed plot,” a place or thing in which something is developed or cultivated. For all of us to develop our knowledge and skills with regard to our subject will require equal amounts of independent study and collaborative learning. Each week we will assemble for 2 hours, bringing with us the results of our independent reading, thinking, and writing. Even more than other kinds of courses, seminars are intended to be places where everyone works together to broaden our knowledge and deepen our skills. As a result, we expect only the best of what you have to offer. Your mind, your courtesy, and your sense of humor should all be operating in top form. You should be eager to learn and grow, open to constructive criticism, and willing to help and collaborate with others. Needless to say, your regular attendance and active participation are required. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent on a particular day, please let us know.

To help us get started, we would like you to submit a 1- to 2-page intellectual autobiography, explaining who you are, where you’ve been, and where you’re going. We are particularly interested in the intersection of your physical travels with your intellectual ones. Please also explain your expectations for this class and how we can help you fulfill them. Use this as an opportunity not only to enlighten us about your personal story but also to establish your own focus for the semester. Please post your autobiography to the “Discussion Forum” section of our Moodle site by 9 a.m. on Monday, September 14. It will not be graded, but its submission will count toward your attendance and participation score.

As part of your attendance and participation score, we may also ask you to participate in workshops and peer-editing groups, in which you will read and comment on the writing of other students, as well as receive valuable feedback about your own writing. You may also need to meet one or more writing partners outside of class.

2. Reading Responses (200 points): Another important part of this course is the series of eight reading responses you will write over the course of the term, in response to our course texts. These responses will allow you share your written thoughts with other students in the class, and they could also help you to develop your own writing projects.

Each response should be 300-600 words long (approximately 1-2 pages) and should be a thoughtful, considered reaction to one or more of the texts we are reading for that week. Your reading responses should be based primarily on your own attention to and engagement with the texts, but we also encourage you to engage the responses of other students by posting follow-up responses.

Reading responses should be submitted to the “Discussion Forum” section of our Moodle site by 9 a.m. on the Monday before each Tuesday class, with the exception of Monday, September 14. (Please post them as text entries, not Word attachments.) Because we all need time to read and process these responses before class, late and missing responses will receive no credit (25 points per response). Please plan your reading and writing accordingly.

Although we will read this forum closely, we will not be providing feedback on individual entries. Instead, we will watch for trends in the length, number, timing, and quality of your messages throughout the semester, and we will let you know if you need to improve.

Depending on the quality of (a) your reading responses, (b) the follow-up responses online, and (c) our class discussion, we may also ask that you contribute one longer response (600-1,200 words) before the end of the second part of our course (Nov. 17). We will let you know if this will be required after the first few class sessions have met.

At the end of the semester, we will grade all your responses collectively according to the following scale:

- A: frequent and courteous participation, with mature and thoughtful insights
- B: above average participation and insight
- C: moderate participation and reasonable insight

3. Leading Discussion (100 points): For one class meeting, you will work with another student to lead class discussion of the text(s) assigned for that day. You may approach this assignment in any way you wish, but you will be expected to provide a 15-minute introduction and to direct our conversation in the ways you find most appropriate. Discussion leaders should consult with us before they plan their presentation and submit a discussion guide instead of their normal reading responses.

4. Final Project (600 points): We will work individually with each of you to develop a final project appropriate to your interests and the goals of this course. This may be a traditional seminar paper, 16-24 pages long, or it may take some other form, such as

- a research prospectus for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation
- a review essay on a major theme of this course, similar to what you might submit for an oral or written preliminary exam
- a manifesto, white paper, or work of creative writing
- a digital, web-based, visual, or mixed-media project
- a syllabus and extensive justification for a new course
- a public education campaign, museum exhibition, or art installation
- a collaborative project with one or more other members of the class

Whatever the project, it must represent a public or publishable example of theory and/or practice related to the transatlantic environmental humanities. We would be disappointed if you did not make plans to use this final project to fulfill some other academic goal—whether that be a programmatic requirement, a conference presentation, a dissertation chapter, a journal article, a professional report, or some other worthy achievement.

To help you achieve your goal, we will ask you to submit three “milestones” throughout the semester, along with a self-evaluation. Each of these components has its own point value:

- Milestone #1: Detailed 3-4-page proposal, consisting of a 1-2-page abstract of your intended subject and method and a 2-3-page annotated bibliography of 6-8 relevant books and/or articles. (Your annotations need not be extensive; 50-100 words each is a good target.) If your project will involve a public component, be sure to indicate your intended audience, method of delivery, predicted impact, and “theory of change.” Due October 13 (50 points).
- Milestone #2: Progress report, 2-3 pages, explaining what remains to be done and including a longer review or discussion of a single article or book. Due November 10 (25 points).
- Milestone #3: Class presentation of your project and your progress on it (using PowerPoint/Prezi/Keynote as needed). Due in December, dates TBA (50 points).
- Final Project: Due on Friday, Dec. 18 by 11:59 p.m. (450 points).
- Self-evaluation: Due on Monday, Dec. 21 by 11:59 p.m. (25 points).

We would of course be happy to review additional abstracts, outlines, and partial or complete drafts, with sufficient notice.

For help in planning large and/or collaborative projects, see the University Library's “Assignment Calculator” <<https://www.lib.umn.edu/apps/ac/>> and the Center for Educational Innovation's site on “Surviving Group Projects” <<http://teamwork.umn.edu>>.

Contact Us

How can you contact us to help you learn?

The best way to contact us is immediately after class; we would be happy to meet with you briefly to answer a question or elaborate on a point made in class. To contact us at other times, email is almost always the best way to reach us. We encourage you to talk with us outside of class, so we can get to know you better as a person and learn more about the subjects that interest you, since the main reason we are here is to help you learn and grow. **Our contact information appears at the top of this syllabus.**

Course Schedule

How is this course structured to develop your knowledge, understanding, and abilities throughout the semester?

This schedule is subject to change, so if you miss a class you should check with a classmate for the most current information. Lecture notes, handouts, and additional readings will be available on our web site.

1. Triangulating “Transatlantic Environmental Humanities”

Tu 9/8 **Week 1: Welcome**

Tu 9/15 **Week 2: New Directions in the Environmental Humanities**

Read:

- Stephanie LeMenager and Stephanie Foote, “Editor’s Column” ([Resilience](#) manifesto)
- Stephanie LeMenager, “The Environmental Humanities and Public Writing: An Interview with Rob Nixon”
- Stephanie LeMenager and Stephanie Foote, “The Sustainable Humanities”
- Stacy Alaimo, “Sustainable This, Sustainable That: New Materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures”
- Ursula K. Heise, “Globality, Difference, and the International Turn in Ecocriticism”
- Sabine Wilke, “The German Environmental Imagination” (excerpt from [German Culture and the Environmental Imagination](#))
- [Digital Environmental Humanities](#) (look over this web site before coming to class)

DUE: Intellectual Autobiography

[Note: Fabio Parasecoli IAS lecture, Monday, Sept. 21, 12-1:30 pm, Crosby Seminar Room, 240 Northrop]

Tu 9/22 **Week 3: Transatlantic Food Cultures and the Environment**

[Visiting Scholar](#) (UMN): Fabio Parasecoli

Read:

- Fabio Parasecoli, “Introduction: Pop Culture Drama: Food and Body Politics” and “Tourism and Taste: Exploring Identities” (from [Bite Me: Food in Popular Culture](#), 2008)
- Fabio Parasecoli, “Introduction: The Food of Italy: Beyond Myths and Stereotypes,” “Now and the Future,” and “The Globalization of Italian Food” (from [Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy](#), 2015)

DUE: Reading Response #1

Tu 9/29 **Week 4: Environmental Pasts and Futures**

Read:

- Rachel Carson, “A Fable for Tomorrow”
- Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, “The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future”
- Justin Gillis, “Naomi Oreskes, a Lightning Rod in a Changing Climate”
- Hannes Bergthaller, “No More Eternal Than the Hills of the Poets’: On Rachel Carson, Environmentalism, and the Paradox of Nature”
- Dana Phillips, “Posthumanism, Environmental History, and Narratives of Collapse”
- Matthew C. Nisbet, “Ecomodernists Spark Rhetorical Heat”
- Michael Shellenberger, Ted Nordhaus, et al., “An Ecomodernist Manifesto”

DUE: Reading Response #2

Tu 10/6 **Week 5: Climate and Justice in Literature and History**

Read:

- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,” and “Climate and Capital: On Conjoined Histories”
- Naomi Klein, “Capitalism vs. the Climate”
- Margaret Atwood, “It’s Not Climate Change—It’s Everything Change”
- Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
- J.K. Ullrich, “Climate Fiction: Can Books Save the Planet?”

- Adam Trexler and Adeline Johns-Putra, "Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism"
 - Rob Nixon, "Slow Violence"
- DUE: Reading Response #3

Tu 10/13 **Week 6: Ideas of Nature and Animals in the Anthropocene** (First LMU course meeting)

Read:

- Raymond Williams, "Ideas of Nature" (common text)
- Amy Scott, "Twenty-First-Century Sublime: Nature and Culture Entangled"
- Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Visualizing the Anthropocene"
- Elizabeth Kolbert, "The Sixth Extinction"
- Richard J. Ladle and Paul Jepson, "Origins, Uses, and Transformation of Extinction Rhetoric"
- Keith Kloor, "The Battle for the Soul of Conservation Science"
- Jedidiah Purdy, "Anthropocene Fever"
- The Onion, "EPA Announces New Initiative To Conserve Whatever's Left"
- Jennifer Jacquet, "The Anthropebo Effect"

DUE: Final Project Proposal

2. Environmental Humanities in Dialogue

Tu 10/20 **Week 7: Philosophies of Science** (First joint Skype session)

Read:

- Karl Popper, "Truth, Rationality, and the Growth of Scientific Knowledge," pp. 215-228 (common text)
- Thomas Kuhn, from The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 1-22 (common text)
- Minnesota readings (TBA)

DUE: Reading Response #4

[Note: AASHE 2015 Conference & Expo is in Minneapolis Oct. 25 - 28]

Tu 10/27 **Week 8: Feeding Nine Billion** (Second joint Skype session)

Visiting Scholar (LMU): Wolfram Mauser, Geography

Read:

- Johan Rockström, et al., "A Safe Operating Space for Humanity" (common text)
- Dan Philippon, "How Local is Slow Food?" (common text)
- Minnesota readings (TBA)

DUE: Reading Response #5

Tu 11/3 **Week 9: Economics and the Morality of Climate Change** (Third joint Skype session)

Visiting Scholar (LMU): Karen Pittel, Economics

Read:

- John Broome, "The Public and Private Morality of Climate Change" (common text)
- Stern Review: The Economics of Climate Change, Executive Summary, pp. i-xxvii (common text)
- Minnesota readings (TBA)

DUE: Reading Response #6

[Note: LMU doctoral students will visit Nov. 9-13]

Tu 11/10 **Week 10: Energy, Climate, and Culture** (Fourth joint Skype session; LMU visit to UMN)

Visiting Scholar (UMN): Stephanie LeMenager

Visiting Scholar (LMU): Eveline Dürr or Ursula Münster, Anthropology

Read:

- Stephanie LeMenager, "Introduction: Ultradeep, Petroleum Culture in the American Century," "The Aesthetics of Petroleum," "Epilogue," and Appendix 1&2 (from Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century (common texts)

DUE: Reading Response #7; Final Project Progress Report

[Note: Stephanie LeMenager IAS lecture, Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2:30-4 pm, Crosby Seminar Room, 240 Northrop]

Tu 11/17 **Week 11: Observation in the Human and Natural Sciences** (Final joint Skype session)

Visiting Scholar (LMU): Anke Friedrich, Geology

Read:

- selections from Histories of Scientific Observation, ed. Lorraine Daston and Elizabeth Lunbeck (common texts)
- Minnesota readings (TBA)

DUE: Reading Response #8

[Note: UMN students will visit Munich Nov. 23-27]

Tu 11/24 **Week 12: Roundtable on the Anthropocene Exhibit** (UMN visit to LMU)

Visiting Scholar (LMU): Helmuth Trischler, History of Science

Read:

- Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative" (common text)
- Luke Keogh and Nina Möllers, "Pushing Boundaries: Curating the Anthropocene at the Deutsches Museum, Munich" (common text)
- Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin" (common text)
- [Welcome to the Anthropocene: The Earth in Our Hands](#) (students not visiting Munich: look over this web site before coming to class)

3. Final Project Presentations

Tu 12/1 **Week 13: Final project presentations** (for students not visiting Munich)

Tu 12/8 **Week 14: Final project presentations** (for students visiting Munich)

Tu 12/15 **Week 15: Last class, including any remaining final project presentations**

F 12/18 Final Projects due by 11:59 p.m.

M 12/21 Self-evaluations due by 11:59 p.m.

W 12/30 Grades due from Charlotte and Dan by 11:59 p.m.