

Art in Times of Environmental Crises

City College CUNY | ART 22600—1XX | Summer 2026

Tuesday/Thursday 6:15-9:05pm
Online/synchronous
Prof. Arnaud Gerspacher
agerspacher@gradcenter.cuny.edu

This course explores the history of ecological art beginning in the 1960s up to present-day artists fighting for social, political, and environmental change and the decolonization of nature. In considering art and the environment, our class will be structured according to some of the most urgent issues we currently face, including: pollution, ecocide, species extinction, environmental racism, environmental sexism, pandemics, global warming, and climate change.

Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will have:

- gained familiarity with key terms, themes, and strategies relating to environmental art;
- expanded their skills in critically analyzing contemporary issues, especially in group discussions and in writing;
- formed their own ideas about our contemporary world through fundamental social, political, and environmental ideas being developed by artists and theorists;

Required Texts:

[all readings I scanned for you on website]

Requirements:

1) Attendance/Participation (10% of grade):

You are expected to be present at each Zoom session ready with your camera on (if possible). We only meet 5 times on zoom, so you can only miss a session with a viable reason. +/- will be determined by your overall level of participation during the Zoom sessions.

2) Comment Section (30% of grade):

Every Friday I post that coming week's lectures on our website. You can watch the lectures any time before their corresponding class sessions. For each lecture, you will post a comment to the website. These written comments should be substantive and demonstrate that you have watched the lecture and done the readings. See "comment section guidelines" tab on website for further details.

3) Discussion Leading (20% of grade):

You will present on an art object for a discussion leading presentation during one of our sessions over the semester (see schedule on the course website). Discussion leading should be fun, but also critical and informative. See "Discussion leading" tab on website for further details.

4) Final Research Project (40% of grade):

You will write a research paper on a topic relevant to our class. See "Final Research Project" tab on website for further details.

Academic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will not be tolerated. Students found to have committed an act of academic dishonesty will fail the assignment for which an infraction is suspected and substantiated.

Disability Services:

North Academic Center (NAC)
Room 1/218
160 Convent Avenue
(212) 650-5913. &
disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu

Diversity Statement:

This course promotes the study of diverse perspectives, cultures, practices, and ways of being. We hope to embrace and be inclusive of each other's differences, which will make our conversations that much richer. If mistakes are made, please remain generous and regard any missteps in class as a chance to be constructive.

Schedule and Readings

June 2 Introduction **zoom**

Hello/Syllabus

June 4 When Are We?

Readings:

- Kolbert, “Enter the Anthropocene—Age of Man,”
- Demos, *Welcome to the Anthropocene!*, pp. 5-22
- “Geological Records,” in Fowkes, *Art of Climate Change*, pp. 14-23

June 9 Fossil Fuels

Reading:

- “Blackout” in Demos, *Beyond The World’s End*, pp. 43-67
- “Crude Oil” in Fowkes, *Art of Climate Change*, pp. 36-47

June 11 Discussion Leading **I zoom**

June 16 Animals

Reading:

- “Activist Abstraction: Anita Krajnc, Save Movement Photography, and the Climate of Industrial Meat,” Alan C. Braddock, in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*, pp. 353-66
- “Nonhuman Persons” in Fowkes, *Art of Climate Change*, pp. 183-90

June 18 Slow Violence

Reading:

- Nixon, *Slow Violence*, pp. 1-1
- “Visualizing Atmospheric Politics,” Amy Balkin, in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*, pp. 230-41

June 23 Discussion Leading **II zoom**

June 25 Climate Refugees

Reading:

- “The Visual Politics of Climate Refugees” in Demos, *Beyond The World’s End*, pp. 68-95

June 30 Postnatural

Reading:

- Demos, “The Post-natural Condition” in *Decolonizing Nature*, pp. 101-20
- “Synthetic Environments” in Fowkes, *Art of Climate Change*, pp. 48-57

July 2 Discussion Leading **III zoom**

July 9 Geo-engineering and/or Social Justice

Reading:

- “To Save A World” in Demos, *Beyond The World’s End* pp. 137-62

July 14 Plant Politics

Reading:

- “Vegetal Agency,” “Botanical Politics,” “Self-Management of Plants” and “Arboreal Worlds” in Fowkes, *Art of Climate Change*, pp. 126-33, 134-44, 145-52, and 162-71

July 16 Discussion Leading IV **zoom**

July 21 Free Research Day

July 28 Final Project Due

Class Policies:

Be respectfully at all times. When emailing, take the time to compose an e-mail (especially when sending an attachment). For a remote course it is important to keep the lines of communication open—so please do not hesitate to email with any questions or concerns.