# WGST 4260/5800: Queer Ecologies

Fall 2025

Tuesday/Thursday 2-3:20

GAB 317

## **Instructor Information**

Dr. Katherine Ritter (she/her/hers)

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Email address (preferred method of communication): katherine.ritter@unt.edu

## **Course Description, Structure, and Objectives**

What would it mean to take seriously the notion that the seemingly fixed boundaries separating human and non/more-than-human worlds are far more porous than previously imagined? That artistic vision, queer and trans subjectivities, and subaltern perspectives are guideways to imagining different ways of being in relation with the so-called “natural” world? This invitation grounds our course and its goals. Over the course of this semester, we will engage the arts, humanities, and sciences to explore such wide faceted phenomenon as the social construction of the Human, queer and trans subjectivities in “nature,” and anti-racist, decolonial approaches to cultivating reciprocity with the more-than human world. We are at an exceedingly significant inflection point in Humanity’s history and its intersection with planetary precarity. Apocalyptic imaginaries abound and we will engage them in our course. Equally important, however, is the imperative to recast and recontextualize Apocalyptic imaginaries of the current planetary moment in the context of long histories of endurance, abundance, creativity, and refusal. Over the course of this semester, we will seriously engage these visions and, in the process, construct and articulate our own queer ecological lenses.

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

1). Define queer ecologies as a conceptual argument and theoretical touchstone.

2). Describe the breadth of debates and various arguments surrounding the naming of the current geological epoch as the “Anthropocene.”

3). Describe the importance of the arts and humanities (in addition to scientific inquiry) in articulating and corroding the effects of global climate change.

4). Articulate the significance of theories of social constructionism, Cartesian / nature-culture dualisms, and the social construction of the category of the Human.

5) Express a nuanced and proliferation of answers to the question: is nature queer?

## **How to Succeed in this Course**

The main components required for success in this course are curiosity, respect, and communication. I am always open and available to meet with you to discuss any issues or concerns that may come up over the course of our class. On that note, I find students are more likely to take advantage of office hours if I keep my availability for them flexible, rather than having a fixed office hours, so office hours are by appointment. Simply email me if you have a question or concern you would like to meet to discuss and we will find a time to meet that is convenient.

I believe strongly in providing accessibility in the classroom. Please reach out to me directly to discuss any accommodations that might be helpful for you to succeed in this course. I am flexible and open to exploring even creative options that will help you in this goal. That being said, **the main factor that will impact your success in this course is your willingness to show up and engage**. Consistent participation in this course from all students is essential to the success of our class. We will discuss this expectation in further detail during our first classes.

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the [Office of Disability Access](https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access) website (<http://www.unt.edu/oda>). You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

Communication Practices:

*Connect with me through email and/or by scheduling to meet with me over office hours. During busy times, my inbox becomes rather full, so if you contact me and do not receive a response within two business days, please send a follow up email. A gentle nudge is always appreciated.*

Academic Success Resources:

*UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grow. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here’s how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. Get hired. To learn more about convenient campus resources and information on how you can prioritize wellness and achieve success with the support of UNT’s caring community, go to*[*succeed.unt.edu*](http://success.unt.edu/) *(*[*https://success.unt.edu/*](https://success.unt.edu/)*) and explore* [*wellness.unt.edu*](https://wellness.unt.edu/) *(*[*https://wellness.unt.edu*](https://wellness.unt.edu)*).*

## **Supporting Your Success and Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment**

*I value the many perspectives students bring to our campus. Please work with me to create a classroom culture of open communication, mutual respect, and belonging. All discussions should be respectful and civil. Although disagreements and debates are encouraged, personal attacks are unacceptable. Hostilities, specifically in the form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, and any other ad hominin attacks will not be tolerated. Together, we can ensure a welcoming classroom for all. We will at times be dealing with difficult subject matter; I ask that we create a brave, open space together where everyone feels comfortable sharing. If you ever feel like this is not the case, please stop by my office and let me know. We are all learning together.*

*Every student in this class should have the right to learn and engage within an environment of respect and courtesy from others. We will discuss our classroom’s habits of engagement and I also encourage you to review UNT’s student code of conduct so that we can all start with the same baseline civility understanding* ([Code of Student Conduct](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012)) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/07-012>).

**AI (Artificial Intelligence) Considerations and Responsibilities**

Here are some things to consider as AI programs develop and their use rises. Natural language processing (NLP) applications like ChatGPT or Sudowrite can be tools for helping us improve our writing, communication, and stimulate our thinking. However, they should never serve as a substitute for our own thinking, writing, and communication. And, in our course, they cannot. If you must use one of these apps at any point in our course, think of the help you get from NLP apps as a much less sophisticated version of the assistance you can receive (for free!) from the UNT Writing Center tutor. UNT tutors and coaches might ask questions to jump-start your imagination, steer you away from the passive voice, or identify a poorly organized paragraph, but should never do the writing or thinking for you. Also, important to realize: an NLP app is not a person. It is a machine that is trained to recognize patterns, reorganize them and regurgitate “data” back. It cannot think for itself. And it cannot think for you. With that analogy in mind, we will adhere to the following guidelines in our class. Appropriate use of AI: • You are free to use spell check, grammar check, and synonym identification tools (e.g., Grammarly) • You are free to use app recommendations for rephrasing sentences or reorganizing paragraphs you have already drafted: • Using sentences or paragraphs suggested by an app without providing quotation marks and a citation, just as you would to any other source, is plagiarism. If you use ChatGPT to *generate knowledge*, you must cite the information given to you. • You may not have an app write a draft of an entire post or assignment for you. In our class, your insights, and the connections you make are what we need to hear. **ANY** use of AI to generate entire paragraphs or stretches of writing, or to formulate arguments that you then pass off as your own, will be flagged as plagiarism and treated as such.

**ALSO ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO NOTE:** the devastating environmental impacts related to the development of AI, especially generative AI, cannot be overstated. This is especially pertinent to the themes of our course and will be something we will discuss in class.

## **Required/Recommended Materials**

* You are required to acquire two novels, *The Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler and *The Fifth* Season by NK Jemisin for our course. I highly suggest utilizing the library early in the semester to acquire these texts. All other readings will be provided on Canvas under “Files.”
* Technology requirements for courses with digital materials:

This course has digital components. To fully participate in this class, students will need internet access to reference content on the Canvas Learning Management System. If circumstances change, you will be informed of other technical needs to access course content.  Information on how to be successful in a digital learning environment can be found at [Learn Anywhere](https://online.unt.edu/learn) (<https://online.unt.edu/learn>).

## **Course Requirements/Schedule**

**ALL DATES/ASSIGNMENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

| ***Date*** | ***Topic*** | ***Assignment*** | ***Points Possible*** | ***% of Final Grade*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Ongoing* | Participation | This grade is calculated according to your consistent and informed participation in class discussion that makes it clear you have attended class prepared and having read that week’s readings, and any in-class writing assignments or responses that may be assigned. For every class, you will be expected to bring in 3-4 discussion questions that you are prepared to pose to the larger class based on the readings. Each student is allowed two no-questions-asked absences from class without it impacting their grade. Beyond this, students are expected to attend each class session and are expected to come to class prepared, having read the course material for that session, and with discussion questions prepared. | 100 | 25% |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| *Due by 11:59 November 11th on Canvas* | Novel reflections | We will be reading two novels in our course, *The Parable of the Sower* and *The Fifth Season*. By November 11th at 11:59 pm, students are required to submit a reflection paper discussing one of the two novels. Prompt forthcoming. | 100 | 25% |
| *Ongoing – see course schedule for dates* | Queer Nature Walks | Information about this assignment is forthcoming and will be discussed during our first class session. | 100 | 20% |
| *Due by 11:59 PM December 10th*  *On Canvas* | Final assignment | We will collaborate together about the form that the final project/assignment will take. I am open to having the final paper/project be a creative interpretation of the themes of the course, including art pieces or a collection of poetry, etc, as well as the option of a traditional final paper. We will discuss this during our first class meeting. | 100 | 30% |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Students will be notified by Eagle Alert if there is a campus closing that will impact a class. The calenda is subject to change. Please refer to: [Emergency Notifications and Procedures Policy](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049>).

## Assessing Your Work

Please refer to UNT’s Academic Integrity Policy and familiarize yourself with the parameters of this policy and follow them diligently for every assignment:

[Academic Integrity Policy (PDF)](file:///Users/katherinemritter/Downloads/Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20(PDF)) (<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-049>).

You will be provided with individual rubrics outlining the grading parameters of the midsemester and final assignments as well as the class presentations. Refer to the syllabus for what constitutes your participation grade for this class.

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

*Every student in my class can improve by doing their own work and trying their hardest with access to appropriate resources. Students who use other people’s work without citations will be violating UNT’s Academic Integrity Policy. Please read and follow this important set of* [*guidelines for your academic success*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) *(*[*https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003)*). If you have questions about this, or any UNT policy, please email me or come discuss this with me during my office hours.*

*Honor Code: “I commit myself to honor, integrity, and responsibility as a student representing the University of North Texas community. I understand and pledge to uphold academic integrity as set forth by* [*UNT Student Academic Integrity Policy, 06.003*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003) *(*[*https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003*](https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003)*). I affirm that the work I submit will always be my own, and the support I provide and receive will always be honorable.”*

## Attendance and Participation

*I have great respect for students who are balancing the demands of their coursework with the responsibilities of caring for family members. While I understand extenuating circumstances and, at times, there may be some flexibility we can offer to support your academic success, it is absolutely essential to the success of this course that you attend consistently. For this reason, you have two “no-questions-asked” absences over the course of our semester. Beyond that and if you anticipate missing more classes than those two, you must let me know and, depending on the circumstances, you will see these absences reflected in your participation grade.*

*Because this course involves collaboration, participation is absolutely essential to learning. Our project-based activities require you to be actively engaged in discussions and group work. I understand tardiness and absences may occur. If you are late to class, please drop me an email to let me know the circumstances.*

**Class Schedule (ALL MATERIALS/DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

**Tuesday August 19th– Class Introductions / Syllabus Overview**

**Thursday August 21st** – **The Anthropocene and the Human: A brief introduction**

Read:

Paul Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind” (Canvas)

Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Cthulucene: Making Kin” (Canvas)

Greta Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” (Canvas)

**Tuesday August 26th**- **SCHEDULE TBA**

**Thursday August 28th-** **SCHEDULE TBA**

**Tuesday September 2nd**- **The Anthropocene and the Human: A brief introduction, continued**

Read: Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument” (Canvas)

**Thursday September 4th**- **The Anthropocene and the Human: A brief introduction, continued**

Read: Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Katherine McKittrick, *Dear Science and Other Stories* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Tuesday September 9th- Contextualizing Queer Ecologies**

Read:

Nicole Seymour, Introduction, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the queer ecological imagination* (Canvas)

Mortimer-Sandilands, Erickson, Introduction: A Genealogy of Queer Ecologies, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Canvas)

First queer nature walk discussion/reflection in class.

**Thursday September 11th – This Must Be the Place: Rural Queer Geographies**

Read:

*Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers In Rural Queer Studies* (Excerpts)(Canvas)

Josh Thompson, Clint Whitten, “Possibilities for Rural Queer Liberation” (Canvas)

Lucas Crawfod, “A Good Ol’ Country Time: Does queer rural temporality exist?” (Canvas)

**Tuesday September 16th – (More than Human) Ghosts: Haunting the Anthropocene and other place-based studies**

Read:

Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black women and the cartographies of struggle* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Banu Subramaniam, *Ghost Stories for Darwin* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

*Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Thursday September 18th - Continued**

Read:

Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black women and the cartographies of struggle* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Banu Subramaniam, *Ghost Stories for Darwin* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Urusula Kruwick, *Haunting Ecologies: Victorian Conceptions of Water* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Tuesday September 23rd – Water**

Read:

“Blue Humanities – Ocean, Sea-Scapes, and Ecotones” (Canvas)

Jeremy Chow and Brandi Bushman, “Hydro-eroticism”

Jeremy Chow, “Wasted: Wastewater, Hygiene Theatrics, and Contaminated Imaginaries” (Canvas)

**Thursday September 25th – Water, continued**

Read:

Jeremy Chow, *The Queerness of Water: Troubled Ecologies in the Eighteenth Century* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Cleo Woelfe-Erskine, *Underflows: Queer Trans Ecologies and River Justice* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Tuesday September 30th – Fungus!**

Read:

Kashian and Djoulakian, “The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline”

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Thursday October 2nd – Fungus II**

Read:

Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

2nd queer nature walk discussion / reflection in class.

**Tuesday October 7th- *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet***

Read:

*Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Thursday October 9th- Queer Times, Queer Futures**

Chakrabarty, “Anthropocene Time” (Canvas)

Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Tuesday October 14th- Temporality, continued**

“Precarious time: queer Anthropocene futures” (Canvas)

“HCI and deep time: toward deep time design thinking” (Canvas)

“Multiple Anthropocenes: pluralizing space-time as a response to the ‘Anthropocene’” (Canvas)

**Thursday October 16th- *Parable of the Sower***

Chapters TBA.

**Tuesday October 21st – *Parable of the Sower***

Chapters TBA.

**Thursday October 23rd – *Parable of the Sower***

Chapters TBA.

**Tuesday October 28th- *The Fifth Season***

Chapters TBA.

**Thursday October 30th- *The Fifth Season***

Chapters TBA.

**Tuesday November 4th- *The Fifth Season***

Chapters TBA.

**Thursday November 6th- *The Fifth Season***

Chapters TBA.

**Tuesday November 11th – The Future Is Kid Stuff**

**Read:**

Kalha, “What the hell is the figure of the Child?” (Canvas)

Lee Edelman, *No Future* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Rebekah Sheldon, *The Child to Come* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Novel reflection paper due by 11:59 PM.**

**Thursday November 13th – Or Is It?**

“Childhood, Futurity, and Settler Time” (Canvas)

Sheldon, *The Child to Come* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Sheldon, “Somatic Capitalism: Reproduction, Futurity, and Feminist Science Fiction” (Canvas)

3rd nature walk discussion/reflection in class

**Tuesday November 18th- The Posthuman**

Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*

Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Thursday November 20th- The Posthuman**

Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

Sepidoza Campos, “*Weh, talaga?!* Camp, Queer Body, and the Posthuman”

**Tuesday November 25th – NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

**Thursday November 27th- NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

**Tuesday December 2nd- Thinking Queerly With More than Human Kin**

Ritter, excerpts from dissertation

Haraway, “Companion Species Manifesto”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Excerpts) (Canvas)

**Thursday December 4th- Final Class Reflections and Looking Forward**

**Final projects due by 11:59 PM, December 10th**