

HISC 108
Parables for a Warming Planet: The Politics of Climate Change
Tuesday/Thursday 1-4:30pm
GSI: Justine Parkin
Summer 2024 (Online Synchronous)

“Truth and fable are no more opposed than science and poetry...”
– Hayden White

Course Description

This course examines the literary forms of parables, allegories, fables, and other kinds of storytelling as a way of understanding and responding to ecological crises. How can these stories capture the scale and myriad agents of climate change, sea level rise, and species collapse while helping us explore options for a planetary future? What kinds of attention do these forms demand of their readers and how is their simplicity matched by a complexity of possible interpretations? This course will also examine the role of figurative language and speculation in the discourse of science. What are the stories that science tells itself? Texts will span literature, science, and philosophy with a special interest in the fields of Black feminism, feminist science studies, and Indigenous thought of the Island Pacific.

Close reading and discussion of written and visual texts will be complemented by writing exercises that engage the themes of the course. This course will meet synchronously online.

Instructor Information/Communication

GSI: Justine Parkin

Office hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm, on zoom; also available by appointment

Email: jeparkin@ucsc.edu

TA: Pablo Escudero, History of Consciousness

Office hours: TBD

Email: peescude@ucsc.edu

Office hours are really wonderful times to connect one-on-one, discuss course materials more in depth, and address any curiosities or challenges you may be having. You are welcome to drop into my office at any time during these regularly scheduled hours. If you would like to meet outside these times, please do not hesitate to email me at the address above. I will get back to you promptly, usually by the same day.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

In this course, we will explore and interpret texts of a variety of forms, including literary, scientific, and philosophical writing, as well as music and visual media. Students will be asked to think critically and creatively about the questions that arise from the course materials and share these ideas in our meetings. As a course in the History of Consciousness, students will be working across traditional disciplinary formations to analyze diverse representations of ecological crises. In class discussions and written work, we will emphasize the practice of close reading, that is, paying attention to the subtleties of diction, syntax, figurative language, and style. In this course, students will: 1) identify how simple literary forms can serve as vehicles for coded political meanings and play with the tension between surface level and esoteric meanings; 2) interpret textual evidence to develop effective, scholarly arguments; 3) compare and analyze representations of ecological crises in literary, visual, and philosophical texts with an attention to form and figurative language; 4) develop confidence and self-efficacy in seeking out unfamiliar, diverse texts to understand the worlds in which they are interconnected; 5) cultivate slow, care-full, attentive reading practices in their academic and everyday endeavors.

Prerequisites

No prior knowledge or coursework is required for this class.

Required Materials

All readings will be available on Canvas. However, students are encouraged to purchase the following books since we will read large sections of them.

Amitav Ghosh, *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2022)

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (2020)

Assignments

As an intensive, 5-week summer course, regular attendance and participation in discussions will be key to success.

Class Participation & In-class Writing (15%)

- ❖ For each class period, students are expected to read all course texts, attend class, and contribute to discussions. We will have short, informal, in-class writing assignments that also constitute a portion of your participation grade.

Discussion Posts (25%)

- ❖ Once a week, you will have a discussion post due in response to specific questions I will post on the Canvas discussion forum. You will write a ~1-2 paragraph reading response

engaging with the course materials for that week. Your responses may take any form, including poetry, fable, allegory, and parable.

- ❖ Respond to at least two of your peers each week (~1 paragraph). Identify any thoughts or questions their response generated for you.
- ❖ Ideally, these posts will be completed by 12pm on the day we discuss the reading(s) so that they can serve as a basis for our discussions before our course meets at 1pm. However, the hard deadline for these posts will be **at the end of each week on Friday**.

Hypothesis Annotations (20%)

- ❖ On alternate days to the discussion posts (see full course schedule below), you will have Hypothesis annotations due on one of the readings assigned for that day.
- ❖ You will add **at least three annotations** to the collective document, ideally **two original annotations** in response to the course reading and **at least one response** to a peer's annotation. Given that students may be reading at different times, you may also complete three original annotations if you are the first to post.
- ❖ Each annotation should be 3-4 sentences at minimum. Ideally, these annotations will be completed by 12pm on the day we discuss the reading(s) so that they can support our class discussions before our course meets at 1pm. However, the hard deadline for these annotations will be **at the end of each week on Friday**.

Lead Discussion on a “Fable of Response-ability” of Your Choosing (10%)

- ❖ Starting in week 2, you will be able to sign up to lead a discussion one afternoon on a “fable of response-ability” of your choosing. It can be a poem, a song, a short story (no more than 2 pages), a fable, a comic, a piece of sci-fi, or even a visual artwork. It may also be a short passage from a longer text that you think deserves to be read more closely. The sky's the limit! Bring something that calls your attention and asks to be read in a new, exciting or unexpected way. How does this text “cultivate a capacity for response” (Kenney) to human, nonhuman or planetary others?

Final Paper (30%)

- ❖ *Preparation* (10%). Starting in week 3, students will select a topic, choose their sources, and meet with me at least once to discuss their plans. I will circulate a sign-up sheet for these meetings during class in week 2. In advance of our meeting, you should send me a short, 1-page write-up/abstract of your ideas, including questions you want to explore and a list of proposed sources. You may want to consult the lists of “recommended readings” in the course schedule to support your thinking.
- ❖ *Final paper submission* (20%). Students will submit a 5-6 page final paper on a topic of their choosing, connected to the themes of the course. Following the course texts, students are encouraged to experiment with the essay form and even write their own

“fable of response-ability.” Regardless of the form, your final paper should cite and clearly engage with at least two course texts.

Late Assignments & Make-Up Work

I’ve included some flexibility in the due dates for Discussion Posts and Hypothesis Annotations to allow you to complete them during the week when it works best for you. Late assignments will be eligible for partial credit. Grades for late assignments will be reduced by 5% for each day beyond the due date. I understand extenuating circumstances may arise, so I encourage you to be in contact with me in advance of due dates to discuss alternate arrangements, as needed.

I also am aware that short, 5-week summer courses go by very quickly! I understand you are taking other classes during this time and you might find it difficult to be timely with your assignments. If you miss a Hypothesis or discussion posting and would like to make up the credit, I welcome you to come to office hours, bring a course text that you would like to discuss in more detail, and some questions or insights to guide a 15-20 min discussion. Of course, you cannot do this for every assignment, but I’ll accept this as make-up work once or twice.

Attendance

You are allowed one absence without it negatively impacting your grade. After one absence, your final grade will be **reduced by one full letter grade**. Please be in contact with me should any issues arise that may impact your ability to attend class.

Student Hours

This is a 5-credit course. Each week, students can anticipate 7 hours of class meetings, 13 hours of reading/viewing, and 10 hours of homework per week.

Academic Policies

All members of the UCSC community benefit from an environment of trust, honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility. You are expected to present your own work and acknowledge the work of others in order to preserve the integrity of scholarship. All work submitted in this course must be your own and must be written exclusively for this course. The use of *any* source (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students’ obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Instances of suspected plagiarism will be pursued vigorously. Violations of the Academic Integrity policy can result in dismissal from the university and a permanent notation on a student’s transcript. For the full policy and disciplinary procedures on academic dishonesty, students should refer to the [Academic Misconduct page](#) at the [Division of Undergraduate Education](#).

Policy on Generative AI:

An intellectual environment is a place to share, listen to, and respond to ideas, whether our own or those of others we've encountered. Being able to adequately and faithfully give due credit to the sources of our ideas is of utmost importance to academic integrity, otherwise how do we know who or what we are talking about! This is true not only in relation to your teacher (who assigns a grade for your work) but also in terms of how you relate with your peers. I/we want to hear *your* own ideas, which includes *your* interpretations of others' work. Because of this, you should not be using generative AI to produce work for this course. You may only use AI tools to help with editing your work (i.e. spell-check and grammar-check) but **may not use it to add to, brainstorm, or write your assignments.** If I suspect you have used AI in one of these prohibited ways, I will have you meet with me to discuss your thinking and writing process. I recognize that these tools are very new and what constitutes permitted versus prohibited use is not necessarily obvious. How to properly cite in academic scholarship is not always intuitive but is rather convention that I will be helping you learn. Please come see me if you have any questions.

Accessibility

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the course. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at drc@ucsc.edu.

Title IX

UC Santa Cruz is committed to providing a safe learning environment that is free of all forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment, which are explicitly prohibited under Title IX. If you have experienced any form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking, know that you are not alone. The Title IX Office, the Campus Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE) office, and Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) are all resources that you can rely on for support.

Please be aware that if you tell me about a situation involving Title IX misconduct, I am required to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. This reporting responsibility also applies to course TAs and tutors (as well to all UCSC employees who are not designated as "confidential" employees, which is a special designation granted to counselors and CARE advocates). Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. The goal is to make

sure that you are aware of the range of options available to you and that you have access to the resources you need.

Confidential resources are available through [CARE](#). Confidentiality means CARE advocates will not share any information with Title IX, the police, parents, or anyone else without explicit permission. CARE advocates are trained to support you in understanding your rights and options, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. You can contact CARE at (831) 502-2273 or care@ucsc.edu.

In addition to CARE, these resources are available to you:

- If you need help figuring out what resources you or someone else might need, visit the [Sexual Violence Prevention & Response \(SAFE\) website](#), which provides information and resources for different situations.
- [Counseling & Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) can provide confidential counseling support. Call them at (831) 459-2628.
- You can report gender discrimination and sexual harassment and violence directly to the University's [Title IX Office](#) by calling (831) 459-2462 or by using their [online reporting tool](#).
- Reports to law enforcement can be made to the UC Police Department, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Fables of Response-ability & Attention

Tuesday, July 30

Orientation to course guidelines, expectations, and online modules

Introduction to terms: fable, parable, allegory

IPCC, “Headline Statements” (Sixth Assessment Report [1](#), [2](#))

Rachel Carson, “A Fable for Tomorrow,” in *Silent Spring* (1962) [2 pages]

Aesop, “The Grasshopper and the Ants” (6th c. BCE)

Jean de la Fontaine, “The Cicada and the Ant” (17th c.)

Thursday, August 1

Martha Kenney, “Fables of Response-ability” (2019) [32 pages] ← **Annotate on Hypothesis**

Aesop, “The Boy Who Cried ‘Wolf’” (6th c. BCE)

Jataka Tales, “The Noise the Hare Heard” (3rd c. BCE - 5th c. CE)

Robert Chandler, “The Remarkable Story of Chicken Little” (1840)

Anohni, “[4 Degrees](#)” (2016 song)

Recommended Readings:

Aimé Césaire, “Poetry and Knowledge” (1982) [16 pages]

Ursula LeGuin, “[The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction](#)” (1986) [9 pages]

Week 2: Allegories, Figures, & Multiscalar Nature-Histories

Tuesday, August 6

↳ **Discussion Post on Readings**

Amitav Ghosh, *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2022) [35 short pages]

Vilsoni Hereniko (dir.), “[Let The Mountain Speak](#)” (2017) [video poem]

David Wallace-Wells, “Cascades” [pp. 3-16] and “Storytelling” [pp. 143-52] in *The Uninhabitable Earth* (2019)

Recommended Readings:

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “In the Ruins of an Enduring Fable” [pp. 133-52] in *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age* (2021)

Amitav Ghosh, “Stories” [pp. 3-66] in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016)

Thursday, August 8

Kyle Powys Whyte, “Time as Kinship” (2021) [pp. 39-55] ← **Annotate on Hypothesis**
Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin” (2015) [7 pages]
Kate Bush, [“Breathing”](#) (1980 song)
Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, [“Tell Them”](#) (2011) [video poem]
Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, [“2 Degrees”](#) (2015) [video poem]
Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, [“Rise: From One Island to Another”](#) (2018) [video poem]

Recommended Readings:

Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “Introduction” to *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019) [pp. 1-32]

Week 3: Haunting Kinships & Oceanic Worldings

Tuesday, August 13

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (2020) [excerpts] ← **Annotate on Hypothesis**

Recommended Readings:

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, “Being Ocean as Praxis” (2019) [pp. 335-52]

Thursday, August 15

↳ Discussion Post on Readings

Keri Hulme, “Floating Words” [pp. 5-19] and “The Pluperfect Pā-Wā” [pp. 25-34] from *Stonefish* (2004)

Italo Calvino, “The Aquatic Uncle” [pp. 69-82] in *Cosmicomics* (1965)

View/discuss in class:

Nadia Huggins, “Transformations” [photo series]
Tony Capellán, *Mar Caribe* and *Mar Invalido* [artworks]
Craig Santos Perez, “Praise Song for Oceania” (2020) [video poem]

Week 4: Science's Metaphors & Speculations

Tuesday, August 20

↳ **Discussion Post on Readings**

Kriti Sharma, "Introduction," "It Depends" [pp. 1-19] in *Interdependence: Biology and Beyond* (2015)

Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Skywoman Falling" [pp. 3-10], "Asters and Goldenrod," and "Learning the Grammar of Animacy" [pp. 39-59] in *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013)

Thursday, August 22

Ovid, Daphne and Apollo in *Metamorphoses* (1st c. CE)

Martha Kenney, "Daphnia and Apollo: An Epigenetic Fable" (2022) [18 pages]

↳ **Annotate on Hypothesis**

Week 5: Spirals of Time

Tuesday, August 27

↳ **Discussion Post on Film/Readings**

Italo Calvino, "The Spiral," in *Cosmicomics* (1965) [pp. 137-151]

[Donna Haraway: Storytelling for Earthly Survival](#) (2016 film) [80 min]

Recommended Readings:

Michael Hadfield and Donna Haraway, "The Tree Snail Manifesto" (2019) [27 pages]

Thursday, August 29

Chuang Tzu, "Butterfly Parable" (4th c. BCE)

Chuang Tzu, "A big tree called a shu" (4th c. BCE)

Chuang Tzu, "Carpenter Shi went to Qi..." (4th c. BCE)

Teresia Teaiwa, "Scholarship and Poetree" (2021) [poem]

Ursula LeGuin, "Deep in Admiration," in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (2017) [pp. 15-21]

Eben Kirksey, "Hope" in *Living Lexicon for the Environmental Humanities* (2014) [6 pages]

↳ **Annotate on Hypothesis**

Recommended Readings:

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Pandemic and Our Sense of Time," in *One Planet, Many Worlds: The Climate Parallax* (2023) [pp. 19-43]