

Syllabus for research course

“Critiques and Practices of Sustainability: Environmental Humanities Perspectives on Chilean and Swedish Ecocultures of Water, Land, and Air”, Spring term 2022

7.5 ECTS

Course code: ACCESS-registered course
Date of approval: 27/10/2021

Departments within ACCESS agreement:

Facultad de Letras, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, the Nordic Institute of Latin American Studies, Department of Romance Studies and Classics at Stockholm University, Sweden and Environmental Humanities Laboratory at the Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden.

Prerequisites and special admittance requirements

This course is intended for PhD students and postdocs in any field in Sweden and Chile (within the Access agreement institutions) working on sustainability or who are interested in sustainability, sustainability thinking, and resilience addressed from cultural studies and environmental humanities. To apply for the course, fill in the application form below.

Course description

Facing global contemporary environmental challenges and the need to imagine sustainable ways of relating to the environment (outlined by the SDGs), this course analyzes forms of connection with the environment elaborated in ecopoetry, ecofiction and ecocinema from Chile and Sweden. This course will address critiques and practices of sustainability from an environmental humanities perspective combining ecocriticism, cultural studies, sustainability studies, and decolonial theories and practices. Students and course conveners will address the following questions: (i) how to envision forms of connectivity between humans and the environment that propose epistemes and environmentalisms beyond prevailing Eurocentric worldviews? How can we develop new understandings that alter our perceptions about human/nonhuman relations in times of climate catastrophes? Can we engage and embody critical and creative sustainability practices that infuse prevailing epistemologies with new understandings of the environment? This course connects Chilean and Swedish human and nonhuman communities through engagements with sustainability thought and discourses as well as creative work that will be presented alongside their socio-cultural and ecological context. Focus will be given to particular histories, situated practices, and embodied experiences in relation to sustainability through a dialogic and transversal methodology between North and South cultures and epistemes.

Course aims

The course aims at (i) deepening and broadening knowledge within the field of sustainability through the prism of environmental humanities; (ii) providing students with core and transferable skills relating to sustainability and international collaboration; (iii) prompting a Chilean-Swedish transdisciplinary network for doctoral students.

Learning outcomes

After completion, the students are expected to be able to:

- identify, understand, and critically and creatively apply concepts such as sustainability, environmental justice, slow violence, sacrifice zones, ecocriticism, environmental humanities, deep time.
- assess how cultural products and expressions (visual and literary) from Chile and Sweden relate to global environmental concerns, propose situated forms of connection to the biosphere, and how they intervene in environmental discourses.

Forms of examination

Grading is done on the basis of student assessments, and a final written paper. Participation is mandatory.

Form of instruction

Instruction is provided in the form of seminars, lectures and workshops in English. The course will be taught online, including interactive synchronous and asynchronous activities.

Application form

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeMREYWgxA06pO-5Rfp8vO5HmulnjhZtShpk6f6vJom6ZoCfg/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0&fbclid=IwAR0EksbiW9oqWwti5Mnsg2QZMGJlrwvwpRUAfIKSyjJSuYbDRGIezM6r6sY>

Course content

Week 1: Introductory unit (3 hours, lecture conducted by the three conveners)

This introductory lecture will be held by the three instructors with the whole group. The course materials, objectives and expected outcomes will be introduced. The lecture will lay the theoretical and epistemic foundations of the course and the representational, critical, and creative aspects of the relation between sustainability and cultural expressions. To address those aspects we will reflect on (i) how do cultural expressions (literature, film, art) contribute to challenge or alternatively support the contemporary and dominant discourse of sustainability?; (ii) in what ways do cultural expressions imagine and narrate sustainability as complex biocultural processes and relations across different temporalities, worlds, and cultures?; (iii) how do specific literary works/genres/traditions anticipate, challenge, and expand the UN SGDs; (iv) how can aesthetics and culture in multiple modes of reading/interpretation help scholars outside the humanities understand divergent narratives about sustainable futures, Anthropocene crises and environmental justice? These questions will be addressed based on the readings for this introductory unit, and they will be used as reference bibliography during the whole course.

Bibliography (selected book chapters and full articles will be available in PDF format in the course platform)

Casals, Andrea. "Ecocriticism and ecological writing in Chile". *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment ISLE* Vol. 23.1 2016 (online).

— "Environmental (In)justice and mestizo writing". *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and*

Environment ISLE Vol. 23.1 2016 (online).

Farrier, David. *Anthropocene Poetics: Deep Time, Sacrifice Zones, and Extinction*. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2019.

Gomez-Barris, Macarena. *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*. Durham: Duke UP, 2017.

Guha, R. & Martínez-Alier, J. *Varieties of Environmentalism. Essays North and South*. Earthscan. 2006.

Nixon, Rob. *Slow violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Pradanos, Luis Iñaki. *Postgrowth Imaginaries, New Ecologies and Counterhegemonic Culture in Post-2008 Spain*. Liverpool UP, 2018.

Sze, Julie (ed). *Sustainability: Approaches to Environmental Justice and Social Power*. New York University Press; 2018.

Åsberg, Cecilia. "A Sea Change in the Environmental Humanities" *Ecocene: Cappadocia Journal of Environmental Humanities*, Cappadocia University, 1 (1): 109-123, 2020.

Recommended bibliography

Adamson, Joni. "Humanities". *Keywords for Environmental Studies*. Adamson, Joni, William A. Gleason & David n. Pellow, eds. 135-139.

Alaimo, S. "Sustainable this, Sustainable that: New materialisms, Posthumanism, and Unknown Futures." *PMLA* 127:3, 558-64, 2012.

Casals, Andrea & Pablo Chiuminatto. *Futuro esplendor: Ecocrítica desde Chile*. Orjikh Editores, 2019.

Cielemęcka, O and Daigle, C. "Posthuman Sustainability: An Ethos for our Anthropocenic Future." *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36:7-8, 67-87, 2019.

French, Jennifer & Gisella Heffes, eds. *The Latin American Ecocultural Reader*. Nothwestern UP, 2021.

Heffes, Gisella. *Políticas de la destrucción/ Poéticas de la preservación*. Buenos Aires: Ensayos críticos. 2013.

Heise K. Ursula, Jon Christensen & Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Environmental Humanities*. Routledge, 2017.

Iovino, Serenella & Oppermann, Serpil. *Material Ecocriticism*. Indiana University Press, 2014.

Johns-Putra A. et al. *Literature and Sustainability: Concept, Text and Culture*. MUP, 2017.

LeMenager, S. & Foote, S "The Sustainable Humanities", *PMLA*, 127:3, 572-78, 2012.

Marcone, Jorge. "The stone guest: *Buen Vivir* and popular environmentalisms in the Andes and Amazonia". *The Routledge Companion to Environmental Humanities*. Heise K. Ursula, Jon Christensen & Michelle Niemann, eds. Routledge, 2017. 227- 235.

Pradanos, Luis Iñaki. “[The Pedagogy of Degrowth](#): Teaching Hispanic Studies in the Age of Social Inequality and Ecological Collapse.” *Arizona Journal of Hispanic Cultural Studies*, 19, 2015, 153-168.

Rupprecht C. et al. “Multispecies Sustainability.” *Global Sustainability* 3, E34, 1-12, 2020.

Yusoff, K. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. UMP, 2018.

Week 2: “Bodies of water” (3 hours, a combination of brief lecture and seminar work, conducted by Dr. Andrea Casals Hill)

This unit focuses on the representations of the human relationship to water, fresh and salty, and the variety of ecosystems it forges, merging SDG 6 (Clear water and sanitation), and SDG 12 (Life below water) in diverse texts encompassing ecopoetry to educational and popular texts. From snowfall and rainfall, to streams and rivers, to springs and geysers, to lakes and the sea, bodies of water are celebrated and feared in literary texts; but the excess or lack of water and drought and its contamination are feared even more. Water is present in the works of artists such as the 1987 winter storm and flood reported by Nicanor Parra in *Temporal*, which today, in the current drought we face, appears almost like a conservation act. In “Canto de los ríos que se aman” (1986), Raúl Zurita names emblematic rivers: from the Bío Bío that signaled the border between the Mapuche peoples’ territory to Río Baker in Patagonia. Both poets use these bodies of water as metaphors of the suffering under the dictatorship; yet, read under the lens of today’s climate crisis awareness, their meanings expand. In the documentary *Botón de Nacar* (2015) Patricio Guzmán further explores this suffering making an analogy to the extinction of indigenous-water-peoples of Patagonia, openly suggesting the relationship between abusive systems and social-ecological (in)justice. Cecilia Vicuña, visual artist and poet intentionally raises awareness of our need to protect water sources, connecting her artistic interventions to ancient Inca sacrifices such as that of “el niño del cerro el Plomo”; a legend that is also brought to the foreground in the graphic novel *Juan Buscamares* by Felix Vega (2017), in a dystopian future where even the oceans have dried up. While Mapuche poet Adriana Paredes Pinda recalls the arrival of the Europeans through the sea (Poema 31; *Üi*), making a direct relation to a colonial (he)story, poet Rosabetty Muñoz resists the neocolonial damage caused by contemporary salmon farms off the coast of Chiloé. The Humboldt current determines the abundance and variety of sea life off the Chilean coast, yet pedagogical texts that aim at raising awareness to care for marine life and ecosystems, are tempted to value the sea for its “productivity”; in this unit we shall also examine texts for young audiences and public opinion discourses that betray their explicit objective as they are framed by growth and productivity narratives. Exploring emblematic cases in the past years in Chile --for example, long lasting drought (Petorca), public opposition to mega dams, the 2010 Tsunami--, how they are present in creative and popular imaginaries, as well as describing and mapping the places a diversity of creative works, popular and pedagogical text refer to and how human life is entangled to these ecosystems will contribute to understanding the current socio ecological crises, and question how artists, activists and educators can contribute to imagining generative presents that sustain life on Earth. In this unit we will connect water and weather and compare its impact in the Chilean context and the Swedish context by addressing the cultural expressions on the ecologies of the Baltic Sea

such as the videopoem *Nourish: A 360°*, Sámi poetry and art reflecting on hydropower exploitation on indigenous lands.

Specific bibliography:

Casals, Andrea. "Ecocriticism and ecological writing in Chile". *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment ISLE* Vol. 23.1 2016 (online).

Guzmán, Patricio. *Botón de nacar*. Atacama productions, 2015

Muñoz, Rosabetty. *Técnicas para cegar a los peces*, Ediciones UV, 2019

Oppliger, Valeria, et al. *Alicia y el bosque de algas*. Orjikh eds, 2019

Paredes Pinda, Adriana. *Üi*, Lom, 2005.

Radomska, Marietta & Åsberg, Cecilia. "Fathoming Postnatural Oceans: Towards a Low Trophic Theory in the Practices of Feminist Posthumanities," *Environment and Planning. E, Nature and Space*, 1-18, 2021.

Travis, Christopher. "Mi voz contra la tierra ahogada: la conciencia ecopoética de Rosabetty Muñoz" *Anales de Literatura Chilena* Año 19, 2018.

Vicuña, Cecilia. *Todos los ríos dan al mar*. Documentary. <https://vimeo.com/205586885>

Zurita, Raul. "Canto de los ríos que se aman" (PDF)

The water crises problematized in media:

<https://www.facebook.com/SECAS.FILM/posts/2870891839889850>

<https://www.gob.cl/cuidemoselagua/>

<https://www.elquintopoder.cl/medio-ambiente/no-hay-sequia-hay-saqueo-una-frase-desafortunada/>

Week 3: "Air and atmospheres" (3 hours, a combination of brief lecture and seminar work, conducted by Dr. Nuno Marques).

The aim of the unit is to show how ecopoets investigate and critique material and cultural constructions of the atmosphere and offer modes of thinking about the Anthropocene alternatives to the geological focuses of the environmental humanities. The session relates to SDG 3, focusing on the cultural and material dimensions of the atmosphere to consider differentiated breathings resulting from location, class, gender, race and disability, air inequality, different access to oxygen, and of respiratory afflictions such as asthma or Covid 19. The session also relates to SDG 11, by showing that ecopoetic practices of relating with the atmosphere create complex and participatory understandings of and relations with the planet. Together with poetry, we will discuss environmental policies of air pollution and perception of air quality in Chile and Sweden. Overall discussion for this session will be structured by the latest IPCC report on Climate Change and with the main guiding question of what/how poetry can contribute to environmental policies. This unit will start with a short introductory presentation on the key concepts of ecopoetry and ecopoetics, focusing on the contribution of ecopoetry to ongoing debates about the Anthropocene. We will focus on the atmospheric in ecopoetry and of the relation of ecopoetry with the atmospheric. Work

will be guided by the following questions: What are the atmospheres with which Chilean and Swedish ecopoetry relate and what are the types of relation with those atmospheres present in the poems? What are the forms of breathing and suffocating present in ecopoetry, and what atmospheric, environmental, and political knowledge is created by them? In what ways do these knowledges infiltrate prevalent Eurocentric and North American worldviews, and how can they contribute a critical vocabulary for the environmental humanities? We will discuss Raúl Zurita's "La Vida Nueva" (1982) [I will provide PDFs], in particular the poem / performance "Escrito en el cielo" written in the sky by airplanes that produced clouds at intervals preset by the poet. This collection of poems perceives the atmosphere as cultural by entangling the form of poems with the materiality of "Escrito en el cielo" is atmospheric, its material is vaporous, its lively and fluctuating page the sky, its transience and momentariness like weather changes. We will also analyze the creation of a shared atmosphere through birdsongs in the poetry of Chilean Mapuche poet Lorenzo Aillapán. To discuss Aillapán poetry we will rely on formulations of the atmosphere as indigenous cosmologies and epistemologies, connecting Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism and theories of new materialism, to entangle these atmospheres with the agency of the poems. Finally, we will discuss the presence of the atmospheric in Jonas Gren collection of poems *Anthropocene- Verse for a new epoch* and its use of scientific language and data to infuse the Anthropocene concept with complexity, showing the multiple agencies that comprise it. Through a discussion of these different forms of engaging with the Anthropocene and their different epistemes, we will generate a discussion on epistemological contributions of ecopoetry to the vocabulary of the environmental humanities. There is no right way to read/discuss poetry! Students are expected to participate in the discussion and to have read the poems and other texts provided.

Specific bibliography:

Bakke, Monika, "Introduction: The Multispecies Use of Air." *Life of Air: Dwelling, Communicating, Manipulating*, OH Press, 2011 [[online](#)]

Bhojvaid, Vasundhara, "Cloud." *Anthropocene Unseen: A Lexicon*, edited by Cymene Howe and Anand Pandian. Punctum Books; 2020, pp.77-80 [[online](#)]

Coole, Diana H. and Samantha Frost, editors. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Duke University Press, 2010 (Intro in PDF)

Donoso Aceituno AE, Espinaza Solar R. Escribir el cielo, escribir el desierto, escribir el acantilado. La escritura material de Raúl Zurita // Writing Sky, Writing Desert, Writing Cliff: the Material Writing of Raúl Zurita. *Ecozon@*. 2015;6(2):67–80.

Gren, Jonas. *Antropocen: dikt för en ny epok* (English translation provided)

IPCC Report (summary for policymakers)

Marques, Nuno. "Atmospheres." *Atmospheric and Geological Entanglements: North American Ecopoetry and the Anthropocene*. Umeå studies in language and literature, 43, pp. 1-37; 105-15. [[online](#)]

Oppermann, Serpil and Serenella Iovino. *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*. Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016. (Intro in PDF)

Zurita, Raúl. “Escrito en el Cielo”. *Descontexto* [[online](#)]

Week 4: “Land epistemologies and geopoetics” (3 hours, a combination of brief lecture and seminar work, conducted by Dr. Azucena Castro)

The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SGD) 15 addresses the importance of healthy land management to sustain human and nonhuman life on Earth. While forests, food, animals, and humans need vital land and soil to grow and flourish, phenomena such as soil erosion, soil acidification, loss of soil biodiversity, and soil contamination lead to desertification and unhealthy soil (*UN Convention to Combat Desertification*). Furthermore, man-made land and soil transformations are connected to deforestation, unsustainable land uses, monoculture agriculture and soil contamination. The environmental humanities and ecocriticism propose ways to understand connections with land, soil, and geological strata as well as the loss of such connections in embodied, situated, and affective manners. In this unit, we will analyze a series of contemporary Swedish and Chilean cultural products under the light of the so-called “geological turn” (Yusoff 2013). In the environmental humanities, this turn implies the immersion of humanity and human activity in geologic temporalities, materialities and processes, to bring awareness of the importance of land and geological processes that can enhance pathways for humanity and the environment. This unit will start by introducing land epistemologies and geopoetics, connecting with sustainability, and in particular, SGD 15 and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), to explore devastation of and reconnection with land, soil, and geological processes. The focus is cultural expressions, both in Sweden and Chile, which explore material and discursive relations to land and land damage. We will connect regions such as Lappland, through the film *Birds in the Earth* by Marja Helander, and the Atacama desert, through the film *Nostalgia de la luz* by Patricio Guzmán as well as the poem “The Desert of Atacama V” by Raul Zurita. We will also address Sweden-Chile environmental conflicts relating to toxic soil and sustainability discourses through the film *Arica* and the documentary /art film “The Weather War” in connection to the speeches by Swedish environmental activists Greta Thunberg and by Mapuche leader Moira Millán on “terricide”. To approach diverse land epistemes, we will put into dialogue poems by Mapuche-Huilliche poet Jaime Luis Huenún, with the instrumental piece Harvest (2009) by Swedish artists Olle Cornéer and Martin Lübcke, and the art-poetry book “A Garden” by Johannes Heldén. By connecting literary and artistic material to theoretical and conceptual work, this unit aims at fostering critical and analytical explorations about: (1) What are land epistemologies and geopoetic expressions and what situated forms do they take in Chile and Sweden in comparative perspective? (2) How are culture and geology intertwined and what political, environmental, and cultural understanding can we derive for sustainability studies? (3) What critiques and practices of land sustainability are expressed in selected cultural productions and how do these dialogue with environmental justice movements, environmental legislation and the “Life on land” in the Global Goals for Sustainable Development? Combining ecomaterialism, ecofeminism, decolonial perspectives, Soil Science and Soil Protection, we will discuss environmental, economic, political, and cultural implications of land epistemologies and geopoetics as expressed in theory and cultural media from Chile and Sweden. We will reflect on how these cultural productions elaborate critical and creative sustainabilities that can stimulate transcultural forms of ecological thinking.

Specific bibliography

Biggert and Bergström. *The Weather War*, 2021.

Cornéer, Olle and Lübcke, Martin. *Harvest*, 2009: <https://highlike.org/video/olle-corneer-and-martin-lubcke/>

Guzmán, Patricio *Nostalgia de la luz*, 2010: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1556190/>

Helander, Marja. *Birds in the Earth*, 2018: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8120754/>

Edman, Lars and Johansson Kalén, William. *Arica*, 2020: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13617456/>

Gómez, Leticia and Castro, Azucena. “Shrieks from the Margins of the Human: Framing the Environmental Crisis in Two Contemporary Latin American Movies.” *Ecozon@. European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 10:1, 2019: 177-195.

Greta Thunberg (selection of recorded speeches).

Heldén, Johannes. “A Garden.” *Klimatsorg*, 10-Tal, 2013: 9-17.

Huenún, Jaime Luis. “Poems.” *Latin American Ecocultural Reader*. Heffes, Gisela, French Jennifer, eds. Northwestern University Press, 2021.

Millán, Moira (selection of translated articles): <https://www.awasqa.org/en/2021/06/11/mapuche-leader-moira-millan-speaks-out-against-racism-terricide/>

Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016.

Ress, Mary Judith. *Ecofeminism from Latin America (Women from the Margins)*. Orbis Books, 2006.

Sze, Julie (ed), *Sustainability: approaches to environmental justice and social power*. New York University Press, 2018.

Yusoff, Kathryn, “Geologic life: prehistory, climate, futures in the Anthropocene”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 31, 2013: 779 – 795.

Zurita, Raul “The Desert of Atacama V.” *Purgatory*. University of California Press, 2009.

Week 5: Colloquium with guest discussants (3 hours, paper presentations by students and discussion with invited discussants)

For this session we will invite four guests. Students will present a draft of their final work (according to instructions) and they will have the possibility of receiving feedback from the invited guests. We will structure the session interlacing draft presentations by students with short presentations by the guest speakers. Finally, we will have a group discussion about the future of the articulation between sustainability and environmental humanities engaging Chile and the Nordic countries, and how the humanities and cultural studies can contribute to sustainable societies. Since we want to favor the transdisciplinary approach, we have chosen a line-up of people that together add the cultural, scientific, and artistic perspectives from Chile and Sweden. The following

discussants will join us for this last session:

-**Cecilia Åsberg**, Professor and Chair of Gender, nature, culture – at Tema Genus, Linköping University, Sweden; Director and founder (since 2008) of the research group and multi-university platform The Posthumanities Hub.

-**Alejandro Urrutia**, Chilean-Swedish poet, and scholar. Lecturer of Spanish Studies at the Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University.

-**Marcarena Gómez-Barris**, Professor and Chairperson of Social Science and Cultural Studies at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York; Gómez-Barris is also the Founding Director of the Global South Center (GSC).