

Environmental Humanities

PhD Course Fall 2016, 7,5 cp

Division of History of Science, Technology and Environment
KTH Royal Institute of Technology Stockholm

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The contemporary challenges arising from global environmental change, such as climate change, land degradation, loss of bio-diversity, freshwater scarcity, toxic contamination and energy scarcity are an important task for scholars from not only the natural and social but also the human sciences. As a result of rising concerns about global environmental change, over the last decade a new scientific field of research has emerged, the Environmental Humanities (EH). Whereas the state of scholarship on issues of environmental change was formerly dominated by the natural, economic and social sciences and technological and problem-solving approaches, this relatively new and rapidly growing field is constituted by the work of scholars from a wide variety of disciplines within the Humanities, including history, literature, philosophy, cultural studies, religion studies, arts, architecture, and linguistics. These scholars are investigating how the human and human agency are to be understood in the age of the Anthropocene – the era in which humans have become a geological force (Croetzen and Stoermer, 2000); interrogate fundamental concepts such as ‘nature’ and the ‘human’; explore humans’ relation to and transformations of their natural and built environments, particularly as these are mediated by culture, values, and the unintended consequences of human activity; and question our ability to self-destruct as well as our motivation to construct sustainable futures.

This course aims to provide students with the more recent methodological and theoretical tools of the environmental humanities. Envisioning the field as a post (or anti)-disciplinary arena, the course will foster students to think across disciplinary borders in order to tackle the environmental and social challenges of current times.

Course Literature

We will use the most recent handbooks in the EH as the background of the course, which will be articulated around the reading and discussion of these books.

Handbooks:

Joni Adamson, Michael Davis, *Humanities for the environment*. Routledge 2017
J. Adamson, W. Gleason, D. Pellow, *Keywords for Environmental Studies*, NYU Press 2016
S. Oppermann and S. Iovino, *Environmental Humanities Voices from the Anthropocene*, Rowman 2016
J. Thorpe, S. Rutherford, L. Anders Sandberg, *Methodological challenges in nature-culture environmental history research*, Routledge 2017

E. DeLoughrey, J. Didur, A. Carrigan (Editors), *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, Routledge.

Books:

S. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*
A. Tsing, *The mushroom at the end of the world*
G. Derrick, *Geographical Imagination*
U. Heise, *Sence of place, sense of planet*
D. Worster, *Dust Bowl*
E. Gudynas, *Beyond development*

Examination

1. Commentaries

For each class students should write a commentary on the book, responding to two questions. The commentary should be about 350 words long.

2. Final examination

The final course assignment is a take-home exam consisting of one essay in which the students are supposed to present their understanding of the EH.

Course Schedule

26 September – S. Alaimo, *Bodily Natures*
10 October – A. Tsing, *The mushroom at the end of the world*
17 October – G. Derrick, *Geographical Imagination*
24 October – Ursula Heise, *Sence of place, sense of planet*
7 November – D. Worster, *Dust Bowl*
21 November – Topic TBD
23 November – Topic TBD
12 December – E. Gudynas, *Beyond development*
13 December - Roundtable Methodologies and approaches in the EH, M. Armiero, L. Robin, S. Sorlin, C. Åsberg