

The College of the Humanities

Humanity in the Anthropocene:
Nature, the Environment, and the Category of the 'Sacred'

Research Seminar HUMS 4903

HUMS 4903 (Fall 2015) Thursdays 2:35 – 3:55 PA 2A46

Professor Noel Salmond

2A38 Paterson Hall; Telephone: x 8162; email noel.salmond@carleton.ca

Office Hours: Thursday 10:30 – 12:00 (or by appointment)

The seminar opens with the recent proposal that we have entered a new epoch, one in which human activity has radically altered the planet and hence we are living in the Anthropocene. What does this mean for our understanding of nature and our relationship with the environment? We trace the roots of the environmental movement in Romantic reactions to industrial modernity. We look at the mystique of wild nature and the notion of “wilderness.” We also consider traditional religious attitudes to nature and calls for the re-enchantment of the world through recovery of the category of the sacred. Currently, the threat of climate change dominates environmental concern. It is the mother of all environmental problems and throws into question faith in inevitable economic growth and industrial progress. The seminar concludes with the 2015 Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'*: a trenchant critique of the dominant economic ethos. The document illustrates the growing propensity within the human community for a new attitude towards nature.

EVALUATION

Reading Responses 5 X 3% = 15%

Five reading responses each on the order of 2 double-spaced pages. These are not summaries, rather they should indicate a grasp of the key issues in each reading and a grasp of each article's central argument or thesis. They should also indicate how the week's readings relate to each other. You are free to choose which weeks you wish to hand these in. However, handing them in on the day of the assigned reading will be rewarded. Responses may include a question you would like to see addressed by the group. These responses are to promote informed engagement at the weekly meeting which is the *sine qua non* of success in this seminar.

Seminar Presentation and Participation 25%

Each student will be responsible for presenting on the readings for the week once in the semester. This will be worth approximately 10% and will be added to the assessment of your overall engagement with the course material as reflected in your participation (15%) in the seminar. Note: *to*

miss more than three of the weekly meetings (which would mean, in effect, you had missed a third of the class) is to forfeit credit for the course

Essay Proposal 10%

Suggested topics will be provided. The proposal indicates your choice from among the topics. It is to consist of a working title, a working bibliography, and a preliminary abstract that details a preliminary thesis statement. The tentative thesis statement should indicate how you intend to focus the chosen topic and the argument to be developed. **Due Oct. 15.** Note: This proposal is an absolutely essential feature of the course. Decisions have to be made early regarding your topic as your research essay will probably necessitate using inter-library loan and other research avenues that necessitate being well underway by mid semester.

Annotated bibliography 10%

This bibliography is to reflect both the general concerns of the seminar and the particular concerns of your paper. It can include both books and journal articles. You may choose to write at length on a few titles or you may choose to write more briefly on numerous titles. **Due Dec. 3.**

Research Essay 40%

A research essay on the order of 15 -20, double-spaced pages. [M.A. students 20- 25pages] Topics must be approved by the instructor. Essays must have a clearly articulated thesis. Essays must also include an abstract. **Due Dec. 10. Note:** late papers (except with medical documentation) are docked 4 percentage points per day.

Note: All course requirements listed above must be fulfilled to gain credit for this course

SCHEDULE

1. Thurs. Sept. 3
Introduction to the course.
Reading: on the concept of the Anthropocene (selected resources)
Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis." *Science*, New Series, 155, no. 3767 (March 1967): 1203-1207.
2. Thurs, Sept. 10
Nineteenth century
Reading: Henry David Thoreau, "Walking" and extracts from *Walden*.
John Muir, selections
3. Thurs. Sept. 17
Early twentieth century: Gandhi as critic of industrialization
Reading: *Hind Swaraj*
Contemporary rebuttal: *An Ecomodernist Manifesto*
4. Thurs, Sept. 24
Indigenous Peoples
Reading: Vine Deloria Jr. "American Indians and Wilderness"
Leslie Sponsel, "Ecologically Noble or Ignoble" in *Spiritual Ecology*

5. Thurs. Oct. 1
Wilderness and Canada
Reading: Grey Owl, *Tales of an Empty Cabin* (selections)
William James, "Nature and the Sacred in Canada" *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 21/4 (1992): 403-17
6. Thurs. Oct. 8
Critiquing wilderness
Reading: William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness"
Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" *Environmental Ethics* 11/1 Spring, 1989
7. Thurs. Oct. 15
Classic environmental texts
Reading: Rachel Carson from *Silent Spring*
Bill McKibben from *The End of Nature*
8. Thurs. Oct. 22
Science and the sacred
Reading: James Lovelock, "God and Gaia" ch. 9 of *The Ages of Gaia*. New York: Norton, 1995
Bruno Latour, "Waiting for Gaia: Composing the Common World Through Arts and Politics"
David Abrams, "The Mechanical and the Organic: On the Impact of Metaphor in Science." In *Scientists on Gaia*, ed. S. Schneider and P. Boston. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.
Thomas Berry, "The Universe Story"
9. Thurs. Oct. 29 BREAK
10. Thurs. Nov. 5
Climate change and its sceptics
Reading: Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math"
Pascal Bruckner, "Against Environmental Panic"
Nigel Lawson selections from *An Appeal to Reason: A Cool Look at Global Warming*
11. Thurs. Nov. 12
Climate change continued
Reading: Naomi Klein, "Dimming the Sun" ch. 8 in *This Changes Everything*. Toronto: Knopf, 2014
Nathan Kowalsky and Randolph Haluza-DeLay, "This is Oil Country: The Alberta Tar Sands and Jacques Ellul's Theory of Technology" *Environmental Ethics* 37, 1 Spring, 2015
12. Thurs. Nov. 19
The Pope and the planet I

Reading: Leonardo Boff, "Liberation Theology and Ecology"
Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis: On Care for our Common Home

13. Thurs. Nov. 26
The Pope and the planet II
Reading: *Laudato Si'*

14. Thurs. Dec. 3
The Pope and the planet III
Conclusions
Reading: *Laudato Si'*

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 7, 2015**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2016**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 6, 2015** for the Fall term and **March 6, 2016** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of a final assignment or take home, in courses without a final examination, must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library