

**Carleton University
Winter 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English**

**ENGL 3915A: Special Topics in Writing
Writing About Climate Crisis**

Prerequisites: a grade of B+ or higher in one of: ENGL 2901, ENGL 2903, ENGL 2915; or departmental permission.

**Thursdays 2:35-5:25pm
Format: In-person, not suitable for online students**

**Instructor: Nadia Bozak
Email: nadia.bozak@carleton.ca**

*****This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term.*****

Course Description

This workshop welcomes any interested student-writer, regardless of knowledge about the climate crisis. Students in past iterations of this workshop have expressed that they valued and benefitted from simply gathering to discuss climate crisis, as this topic comes with strong feelings related to climate grief and climate justice. Speaking about, reading about, and writing about climate crisis are forms of climate action and can promote a sense of hope and empowerment as we respond to and adapt to the changing climate.

This course is a creative writing workshop that explores creative ways of engaging with the climate emergency we all face.

Students may explore chosen methods of self-expression (fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, photography, podcasts, music, to name a few) as long as they feel comfortable working in their chosen genre or medium.

While this course focuses on developing and workshopping our own creative work, we will also read about and discuss how writers, artists, and filmmakers are confronting and engaging with climate crisis.

Bring your ideas, stories, energy, and visions of our climate future as we set out together to engage with this all-encompassing and urgent topic.

The questions and themes we tackle may include

- biodiversity and the representation of non-human species or habitats;
- the emergence of new metaphors or other forms of figurative language that are useful for thinking about climate change;
- the ecological footprint of our own writing practices or other creative output (the use of raw resources, digital technology, and various forms of energy);
- the impact of climate change on students' particular life positions, experiences, and identities.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will emerge from this workshop with a polished creative project that engages with a well-defined aspect or problem of the climate crisis in a chosen genre or medium.

The majority of each workshop will be spent discussing each other's creative work, thus developing skills in self-editing, closely reading as writers, and offering constructive feedback with diplomacy and tact. Students will also engage with radio podcasts, works of art, literature, and scholarship on climate crisis, further developing skills in analysis. Students will also prepare a short presentation on an assigned topic, prepare written responses to assigned readings, and participate in class discussions.

Remember: The success of this workshop and your development as a writer/artist/student depends upon attending the sessions regularly, contributing to discussions, and fully engaging in workshops. You should, therefore, be ready to circulate your creative work among your peers and have it openly discussed. As well as receiving and considering peer-editing comments about your writing, you will offer your peers constructive, thoughtful feedback as well.

The majority of our required weekly readings will be available digitally on Ares through the MacOdrum Library. Others may be posted on Brightspace.

Course Requirements: **(tentative)**

- 1) **5%: project description/rationale:** Beginning in Week Two, students will circulate a description and rationale for the project(s) they intend to work on over the semester. We will discuss these in the workshop, offering advice, feedback, and other comments to support students as they move ahead with their projects.
- 2) **20% Participation:** Participation is based on attending workshops regularly, coming prepared to discuss assigned readings and weekly student manuscripts.
- 3) **10% Reading Responses:** Students will submit four responses to various assigned readings. More details TBD.
- 4) **15%: Event report/ presentation:** Students will attend an event related to climate action (such as Noons for Now hosted by Carleton's Climate Commons via Zoom) and report back to the group about the conversation and experience.
- 5) **20% Micro story/poem:** The first portion of the workshop will be devoted to working on a short micro-fiction story, essay, poem, or other short-form piece.
- 6) **30% Final Project:** Such a 4,500-word story