

Carleton University
Fall 2024 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English
ENGL 3915A: Special Topics in Creative Writing/ Writing About Climate Crisis

Prerequisite(s): a grade of B+ or higher in one of: ENGL 2901, ENGL 2903, ENGL 2915; or departmental permission.

Instructor: Professor Nadia Bozak
Dunton Tower, 1918
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:

How *do* we write about the climate crisis, something so all-encompassing and fluid it seems to defy articulation and representation? This workshop explores creative and artistic ways of understanding, engaging with, and fostering hopeful responses to the climate emergency our planet is experiencing. Part of what this workshop aims to achieve is responding to and discussing topics underpinning the climate crisis (colonialism, capitalism, technology, legacies of social, racial, and gender discrimination). We'll also read compelling climate-themed texts by authors such as Octavia Butler and Vandana Singh while working on our creative pieces (and in a genre of your choice).

We are fortunate to be spending this semester in the Book Arts Lab, a space for students to explore the arts of bookbinding, papermaking, typesetting, and more. Under the guidance of master printer Larry Thompson, we will collaborate on a final project (a bound book in multiple editions) while developing our own creative pieces. In the Winter 2023 iteration of this course, students produced a vibrant, collaborative book featuring linocuts and typeset selections from the climate-themed poems and stories they workshopped over the semester.

The takeaway is that producing a book by hand and as a group compels writers to slow down their creative practice, thus allowing us to collectively contemplate how our words and actions interact with life on Earth in all its complexities. In other words, decelerating our creative, social, and intellectual practices can be an inherently ecological act.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will emerge from this workshop with at least one polished contribution to a collaborative climate-themed project. Students will also gain an introduction to the book arts and learn basic skills in typesetting, papermaking, bookbinding, calligraphy, letterpress printing, and more. Students will also continue to refine their skills in offering constructive peer-editing feedback, receiving feedback on their own, and closely reading and discussing published texts

that engage with the climate crisis.

Most of our required weekly readings (a short story, selection of poems, book chapter) will be available digitally on Ares through the MacOdrum Library.

Course Requirements:

- 1) 5%: project description/rationale: Beginning in Week Two, students will circulate a description of their proposed contributions to a final collaborative project.
- 2) 15% Participation: Participation is based on attending workshops regularly, coming prepared to discuss assigned readings and weekly student manuscripts, respectfully using BAL resources, and overall engagement with the workshop.
- 3) 10% Reading Responses: Students will submit five journal-style responses to assigned readings. The responses can be creative but must demonstrate engagement with the reading material.

OR

10%: Event report/ presentation: Students will attend an event related to climate action (such as “Noons for Now” hosted by Carleton’s Climate Commons) and report to the group about the experience.

4) 20% Source text: This will be an initial manuscript in the shape of a micro-fiction story, essay, poem, or other short-form piece. During weeks 2-6, students will workshop the piece, polish it, and submit it for grading. Your contribution to the final project may be sourced from this piece, or you may produce something entirely new.

5) 40% Contribution to Final Project/ Lab Notes and Reflection Statement