

ENST 4000 – SEMINAR IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES  
THE POLITICS OF THE ANTHROPOCENE (WINTER 2023)



“Airshow” by Fred Herzog, 1968 © Equinox Gallery.

“The conquest of the earth... is not a pretty thing when you look into it...” – Joseph Conrad, 1899

“But where the danger is, also grows the saving power.”- Friedrich Hölderlin, 1803

Updated December 9, 2022

**Instructor:** Dr. David Hugill, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies  
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**Class Meetings:** Tuesdays 11:35AM to 2:35PM

**Office Hours (Loeb B448):** Tuesdays 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM or by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

What are the political, social, ethical, and cultural implications of living in an age where human activity has become the dominant force shaping the planet's environments? Our goal this semester is to think critically about this question as we consider how societal institutions respond to environmental concerns, how various stakeholders understand environmental questions, and how environmental priorities are implemented in social, political, and economic decision-making. To achieve this objective, we will take a deep analytical dive into the meaning and politics of "the Anthropocene." ENST 4000 is an advanced seminar designed to give you an opportunity to build upon and apply the analytical skills and disciplinary expertise that you have acquired throughout the course of your university career.

You should expect the following from our work this semester:

- **Active Discussion:** This is a discussion-based seminar. It is critical that you do the readings in advance and come to class prepared to discuss their contents. The success of this course hinges on active in-class engagement. The significant weight given to participation (20%) as a portion of the final grade reflects this fact.
- **Challenging material:** The weekly readings (generally about 50-75 pages in length) are challenging. You should start reading at least a few days in advance of the seminar.
- **Timely feedback:** I will do my best to return all assignments within two weeks of submission.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to give you opportunities to:

- Develop an in depth understanding of the idea of the Anthropocene, and its contested status
- Engage with cutting edge /contemporary research in the field of Environmental Studies
- Consider the political implications of human-driven environmental and climatic changes
- Engage in comradely classroom exchanges
- Develop high-level communication skills

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Required texts are available online (via the Ares portal on our course Brightspace page) and/or at the MacOdrum Library reserve desk. You might consider purchasing the following three texts, all of which are available under our course number (ENST 4000) at Haven Books (43 Seneca Street.

1. Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018), *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene* (Pelican Books, cheap version, **OR** Yale University Press, beautiful version).
2. Octavia Butler (1993), *Parable of the Sower*, Grand Central Publishing Reprint (2019)
3. Andreas Malm (2021), *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* (Verso)

**CONTENT WARNING:** *The Parable of the Sower* includes descriptions of violence, including sexual violence, as well as other disturbing content (for a full list [click here](#)). If you prefer not to encounter this material, please let me know so we can make an alternative arrangement.

## COURSE CALENDAR

<p><b>Week 1:</b> January 10, 2023  <b>** Preliminary Reflection due by 11:59PM on Friday January 15</b></p>
<p><b>Introduction and Course Policies + the Anthropocene’s “Ur” Text</b></p>
<p>Required Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer (2000), “The ‘Anthropocene’” in <i>The International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGPB: A Study of Global Change of the International Council for Science (ICSU) 41</i>, pp. 17-18.</li> </ul> <p>Note: We will read Crutzen and Stoermer’s very short piece in class. There is no need to prepare in advance!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>UNIT 1: Defining the Anthropocene</b></p>
<p><b>Week 2:</b> January 17, 2023</p>
<p><b>Defining the Anthropocene</b></p>
<p>Required Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018), “The Meaning of the Anthropocene” in <i>The Human Planet</i>, pp. 1-17</li> <li>○ Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018), “Defining the Anthropocene” in <i>The Human Planet</i>, pp. 295-327.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>UNIT 2: Histories of the Anthropocene</b></p>
<p><b>Week 3:</b> January 24, 2023</p>
<p><b>Histories of the Anthropocene 1</b></p>
<p>Required Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018), “Globalization 1.0, “The Modern World” in <i>The Human Planet</i>, pp. 149-187.</li> <li>○ Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz (2017), “Polemocene: Resisting the Deterioration of the Earth since 1750,” pp. 253-287.</li> </ul>

**Week 4:** January 31, 2023

**\*\*A1 Working Definition Assignment due by 11:59 on February 1, 2023**

### Histories of the Anthropocene 2

Required Reading:

- Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin (2018), "Globalization 2.0, "The Great Acceleration" in *The Human Planet*, pp. 225-265.
- Kate Brown, "Marie Curie's Fingerprint: Nuclear Spelunking in the Chernobyl Zone," in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, pp. G33-G50.

**Week 5:** February 7, 2023

### Histories of the Anthropocene 3 +Unit 2 Reading Test

Required Reading:

- Andreas Malm, "Learning from Past Struggles," in *How to Blow up a Pipeline*, pp. 5-63.
- Robert MacFarlane, "Meltwater," in *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, pp. TBD

### Interlude 1: The Anthropocene and Cultural Productions (a Film and a Novel)

**Week 6:** February 14, 2023

### FILM (TBD) – Screening and Discussion

Required Reading:

- NO REQUIRED READINGS (the idea here is to give you a chance to work your way through *The Parable of the Sower!*)

### Reading Break - February 20-25

**Week 7:** February 28, 2022

**\*\*A2 Reflection Paper due by 11:59PM on March 2, 2022**

### Discussion of *Parable of the Sower*

## Required Reading:

- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (novel, 1993)

**IMPORTANT: REVIEW CONTENT WARNING ABOVE!**

### UNIT 3: The Limits of the Anthropocene

**Week 8:** March 7, 2023

#### The Limits of the Anthropocene 1

## Required Reading:

- Eileen Crist, "On the Poverty of our Nomenclature," in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, pp. 53-71.
- Donna J. Haraway, "Staying with the Trouble: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chtulucene," in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, pp. 34-76.

**Week 9:** March 14, 2023

#### The Limits of the Anthropocene 2

## Required Reading:

- Michael Simpson (2020), "The Anthropocene as Colonial Discourse," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38(1), pp. 1-19.
- Kyle Powys Whyte (2018), "Indigenous Science (Fiction) for the Anthropocene: Ancestral Dystopias and Fantasies of Climate Change Crises," in *Environment and Planning E* 1(1-2), pp. 224-242

**Week 10:** March 21, 2023

#### The Limits of the Anthropocene 3 + Unit 3 Reading Test

## Required Reading:

- J Davis, AA Moulton, L Van Sant (2019), "Anthropocene, Capitalocene... Plantationocene? A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises" in *Art in the Anthropocene*, pp. 241-255, available online at <https://bit.ly/1Rgoili>
- Francoise Verges, "Racial Capitalocene: Is the Anthropocene Racial?," on the Verso Blog, <https://bit.ly/3vT5npk>

- Michael Warren Murphy and Caitlin Schroering (2020), "Refiguring the Plantationocene: Racial Capitalism, World-Systems Analysis, and Global Socioecological Transformation," in *Journal of World Systems Research* 26 (2)

#### UNIT 4: What is to be done?

**Week 11:** March 28, 2023

#### What is to be Done? 1

Required Reading:

- Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict," *International Security* 33 (Summer 2008), pp. 7-44 (a key inspiration for Extinction Rebellion)
- Andreas Malm, "Learning from Past Struggles," in *How to Blow up a Pipeline*, pp. 5-64.

**Week 12:** April 3, 2023

#### What is to be Done? 2

Required Reading:

- Roy Scranton, "Introduction: Coming Home," in *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*, pp. 13-28.
- Roy Scranton, "A New Enlightenment," in *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*, pp. 89-110.
- Andreas Malm, "Fighting Despair," in *How to Blow up a Pipeline*, pp. 133-162.

**Week 13:** April 11, 2023

A3 Encyclopedia Entries due by 11:59 PM on April 13th

**Course Farewell/Final Business+ Unit 4 Reading Test**

Required Reading:

- NO REQUIRED READINGS

## ASSESSMENT

Assignment	Weight	Short Description
Participation	20%	A quantitative/qualitative evaluation of engagement (including attendance and active classroom participation). <i>Participation is a significant portion of your mark because seminars only succeed if people show up and are prepared to discuss the assigned readings!</i>
In-Class Responses to Discussion Questions	10%	Five in-class oral reflections (aim for about 2-3 minutes of comments) on weekly discussion questions (available in advance on the course Brightspace page). Written responses are not required, the aim here is to get our conversations rolling! Graded on a complete/incomplete basis. (5 x 2% = 10% total)
Preliminary Reflection	2.5%	A preliminary reflection on the idea of the “Anthropocene.” <b>No late assignments will be accepted.</b>
Final Reflection	2.5%	A final reflection on our discussions. <b>No late assignments will be accepted.</b>
Reading Tests	15%	Three multiple-choice tests based on the contents of the course readings, worth 5% each (multiple choice, written in class).
A1 – Working Definition	5%	A paragraph length attempt to establish a “working definition” of the Anthropocene. All assignments should be uploaded to Brightspace by 11:59PM on February 1st.
A2 – Reflection Paper	15%	A reflection paper on <i>The Parable of the Sower</i> (around 1500 words) All assignments should be uploaded to Brightspace by 11:59PM on March 2nd.
A3 - Encyclopedia Entry	30%	A comprehensive encyclopedia-style entry on the word “Anthropocene” (around 2500 words). All assignments should be uploaded to Brightspace by 11:59PM on April 13th.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON ASSESSMENT

- Late assignments will be penalized by 3% per calendar day (to a maximum of 25% total); no assignments will be accepted after two weeks (unless an alternative arrangement has been made)

- All assignments must follow the style guidelines outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style; citations can be formatted in either the “notes and bibliography” or “author-date” style, so long as one of these options is used consistently throughout the document
- All assignments will be assessed on the overall quality of presentation, including citation format, spelling, grammar, coherence of argument, etc.
- Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. This means grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Carleton University demands academic integrity from all its members. The Academic Integrity Policy (available at <https://carelton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity>) governs the academic behaviour of students. Academic Integrity is defined as:

***“A commitment even in the face of adversity to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.” – Centre for Academic Integrity (1999)***

Academic dishonesty, in whatever form, is destructive to the values of the university, and risks harming the university’s reputation as place of learning and innovation. Furthermore, it is unfair and discouraging to those students who pursue their studies honestly.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentionally 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 that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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.

### ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

Carleton provides [academic accommodation to students](#) for reasons of disability, religious observance,

pregnancy and/or parental leave, sexual violence, and student activities.

Providing accommodations simply means providing alternatives to students who cannot perform the essential requirements of their academic programs due to the reasons mentioned above. At no time does academic accommodation undermine or compromise the learning objectives that are established by the academic authorities of the university.

This section provides only a brief overview of the accommodations policy and process. Please contact [Equity and Inclusive Communities](#) for a full explanation.

### ***Religious Observation***

A request should be made in the first two weeks of the academic term, or as soon as possible where the scheduling of an event or activity conflicting with a religious obligation does not appear in the course outline or calendar. A list of multi-faith holy days is accessible through the [Equity Services website](#). Instructors can also contact Equity Services to confirm the eligibility of a religious event or practice.

### ***Pregnancy and/or Parental Leave***

Requests for parental leave must be made in writing to the Registrar's Office, or in the case of graduate students, to the Office of the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs.

A student who is pregnant may request a temporary modification to her program (e.g., laboratory or field work). The student should meet with the instructor(s). The department chair/director and the faculty dean can assist in the discussion. An Equity Services advisor can also be consulted if a student has questions about pregnancy and/or parental leave.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

Carleton is strongly committed to providing access and accommodation for all individuals with identified and duly assessed disabilities. The university has a [Senate-approved policy on academic accommodation](#) that forms part of its human rights policy. The policy promotes efforts to accommodate students with disabilities so that they will have the opportunity to meet learning outcomes and be fairly evaluated in their performance. In no case, however, does academic accommodation negotiate away, lower, or remove the academic standards and learning outcomes of any course or program, rule, regulation, or policy at the university.

Some students with disabilities may require special accommodations for tests and exams. In these cases, students must present you with a signed accommodation form from the Paul Menton Centre detailing their accommodation needs well in advance of the date of an exam. A copy of the [Paul Menton Centre accommodations policy can be found here](#).

### ***Survivors of Sexual Violence***

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support,

visit [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support).

***Accommodation for Student Activities***

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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. For more details, see [the policy](#).