

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LETTERS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
SYLLABUS**

Title of the Course: IED 6/716 CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN WESTERN
PHILOSOPHY

Instructor: Prof.Dr. Serpil Oppermann

Year and Term: Fall, 2014

Class Hours and Classroom: Wednesday: 13:00-16:50 Seminar room.

I. Aim and Content: This course is focused on the paradigm change initiated by the Material Turn in Western philosophy and its transformatory impact on literary studies, in the way the discipline of the Humanities is being reconfigured as "environmental humanities." The course will provide the students with a broad foundation in the avant-garde movements in contemporary philosophy. The major focuses of the course will be critical Posthumanisms, New Materialisms, Material Feminisms, the Anthropocene discourses, and related developments. We will discuss their interdisciplinary context in contemporary thought, and thus will be referring to biotechnologies and technoscientific studies. The students are expected to critically read and discuss the texts in class. Reading assignments are based on the selected essays and books of specific thinkers to give the students an overview of the current trends of contemporary philosophy and the changing concepts of reality, humanity, language, agency, and the world. Please note that there may be additional suggested readings as the semester progresses.

II. Course Outline:

Week I and III: Introducing NEW MATERIALISMS

Reading Material:

*Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds. *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*.

Durham: Duke UP, 2010. "Introducing the New Materialisms" 1-43.

* Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, eds. *Material Ecocriticism*. Bloomington: Indiana

UP, 2014. "Introduction: Stories Come to Matter." 1-17.

* Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds. *Material Feminisms*. Bloomington: Indiana UP,

2008. "Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory." 1-19.

Chp. 8 by Stacy Alaimo. "Trans-Corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature." 237-264.

Chp.4 by Karen Barad. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." 120- 154.

*Karen Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: quantum physics, and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007. Chp.4. "Agential Realism: How Material-Discurisve Practices Matter." 132-185.

* Jane Bennett. *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Preface. Vii-xix. Chp. 2. "The Agency of Assemblages." 20-38.

*Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, eds. *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012. Chp.6 "Pushing Dualisms to an Extreme." 115-136

Week IV-VIII: Introducing POSTHUMANISM

Reading Material:

* Katherine N. Hayles. "Afterword: The Human in the Posthuman." *Cultural Critique*. 53, (Winter, 2003):134-137.

* Katherine N. Hayles. "After Shocks: Posthuman Ambivalence." *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 1 (2010): 262–271.

* Neil Badmington. "Theorizing Posthumanism." *Cultural Critique*. 53 (Winter, 2003): 10-27.

* Pramod K. Nayar. *Posthumanism*. Malden, MA: Polity P, 2014. Chp.1 "Revisiting the Human: Critical Humanisms." 1-34.

* Cary Wolfe. *What is Posthumanism?* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. "Introduction: What is Posthumanism?" xi-xxxiv.

*Stefan Herbrechter. *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Chp.1 "Towards a critical posthumanism." 1-29; and Chp.2 "A geneology of posthumanism." 31-73.

* Rosi Braidotti. *The Posthuman*. Chp. 1. "Post-Humanism: Life Beyond the Self." 13-54.

* Donna Haraway. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Chp. 9. "Cittercam: Compounding Eyes in Naturecultures." 49- 263.

* Claire Colebrook. *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction*. Vol.1. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities P, 2014. Chp. 8 "Posthuman Humanities." 158-184.

Week IX-XII: THE ANTHROPOCENE

Reading Material:

- * Mark Whitehead. *Environmental Transformations: A geography of the Anthropocene*. New York: Routledge, 2014. Each student will be responsible for ONE chapter.
- * Nancy Tuana and Chris J. Cuomo. "Climate Change—Editors' Introduction." *Hypatia*. 29.3 (Summer 2014): 533-540.
- * Michael D. Doan. "Climate Change and Complacency." *Hypatia*. 29.3 (Summer 2014): 634-650.
- * Nigel Clark. "Volatile Worlds, Vulnerable Bodies: Confronting Abrupt Climate Change." *Theory, Culture & Society*. 27.2-3 (2010): 31-53.
- * Dipesh Chakrabarty. "Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change." *New Literary History*. 43.1 (Winter 2012): 1-18.
- * Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer. "The 'Anthropocene.'" *Global Change Newsletter* 41 (May 2000):17-18.
- * Jan Zalasiewicz, et al. "Are we now living in the Anthropocene?" *GSA Today*. 18. 2 (February 2008): 4-8.
- * Bruce D. Smith and Melinda A. Zeder. "The Onset of the Anthropocene." *Anthropocene*. 4 (December 2013): 8-13.
- * Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg. "The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative." *The Anthropocene Review*.1.1 (2014):62-69.
- * Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Alan Haywood and Michael Ellis. "The Anthropocene: a new epoch of geological time?" *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* 369 (2011): 835-841.
- * Jan Zalasiewicz, Mark Williams, Will Steffen, Paul Crutzen. "The New World of the Anthropocene." *Environmental Science and Technology*. 44 (2010): 2228–2231.
- * Jan Zalasiewicz Colin N. Waters Mark Williams. "Human bioturbation, and the subterranean landscape of the Anthropocene." *Anthropocene* (July 2014): <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2213305414000356>.
- * Whitney J. Autin and John M. Holbrook. "Is the Anthropocene an issue of stratigraphy or pop culture?" *GSA Today*. 22.7 (July 2012): 60-61 and the Reply to the essay by Jan Zalasiewicz et al. 62-63.
- * Ben Dibley. " 'The Shape of Things to Come': The Seven Theses of the Anthropocene and Attachment." *Australian Humanities Review*. 52 (May 2012): 139-15.
- * Lesley Head. "Contingencies of the Anthropocene: Lessons from the 'Neolithic'." *The Anthropocene Review*. 1.2 (2014): 113-125.
- * Eileen Crist. "On the Poverty of Our Nomenclature." *Environmental Humanities*. 3 (2013): 129-147.
- * Bruno Latour. "Agency at the time of the Anthropocene." *New Literary History*. 45.1 (Winter 2014): 1-18.

Useful Websites:

- * Andrew Revkin, “Confronting the Anthropocene” New York Times May 11, 2011: n.p.
http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/confronting-the-anthropocene/?_php=true&type=blogs&r=0.
- * Elizabeth Kolbert, “Age of Man,” National Geographic March 2011, n.p. Photo by Jens Neumann/Edgar Rodtmann, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/03/age-of-man/kolbert-text>.
- * Globaia. “Cartography of the Anthropocene.” 2013.
<http://globaia.org/portfolio/cartography-of-the-anthropocene/>
- * Anthropocene Institute. <http://www.anthropoceneinstitute.com/node/1>
- * Betsy Wills, “‘Anthropocene’: Ariel Photography by David Thomas Smith.” Artstormer. March 15, 2013. <http://artstormer.com/2013/03/15/anthropocene-aerial-photography-by-david-thomas-smith/>
- * Jason Bidel, “Our Climate Change, Ourselves” National Resource Defense Council, On Earth, May 6 2014, <http://www.onearth.org/articles/2014/05/national-climate-assessment>
- * “What is ocean acidification?” NOAA,
<http://www.pmel.noaa.gov/co2/story/What+is+Ocean+Acidification%3F>

Week XIII: Overview –General discussion and critical assessment

Week XIV: Final Exam

III. Textbooks and Articles: There is no one single Reader or a textbook that covers all the topics. But students are responsible for research and bring in relevant texts.

IV. Method of Instruction: Interactive, based on discussions

V. Requirements: Attendance is compulsory. At class meetings students will present a **response paper**. (These presentations count for 10 % of the grade). By mid-semester each student will be responsible for completing a 10 page term paper on a self-selected topic. The final paper is worth 40 % of the final grade. There will be a final exam which will count as 50% of the overall grade.

Response Papers: 10%

You'll be responsible for writing 2-page response papers on one or more of our weekly texts. You can choose the six weeks that you'll be writing, but the papers **are due at class time for that day**. I don't want a simplistic generalization of texts. I want to see your original response to our readings to see how you interpret the issues and ideas, and how you deal with interpretative challenges that these texts might pose for you. The goal is to get you thinking about a text's argument in a slightly more formal way than just taking notes in the margins of a book.

Term Paper: 40%

A maximum 10-page essay exploring any issue in more detail or in a different context than we've discussed it. You are required to do external research to expand your awareness of the current thinking on your topic. Overall summaries of ideas won't be accepted. The best essays are generally persuasive—that is, they take a stance and try to convince the reader to accept the author's analysis.

Plagiarism and Cheating: This will result in a straight F2, and an investigation will follow.

VI. Research Topics:

In each reading material students are asked to bring into discussion how these ideas, issues and concepts can be relevant in literary studies. Climate Change fiction or "CLI-FI" as the new genre can be useful in these debates. What impact do the philosophical ideas have on the authors? What are the main terms in these philosophers' thoughts? In what way have they changed the Humanities? How did they influence our ways of thinking about the world? What is their impact on the use of language? In what manner do they transform our notions of the self, identity, reality, discourse, text, and context; and how do they work and construct subjects? In what manner did they influence our living in the world? In what way do they rethink epistemology, ontology and ethics? And finally, what do you think of the future of human, more-than-human, and nonhuman realities from the vantage point of the new developments in philosophy today?