



Margaret and Christine Wertheim with the Institute For Figuring. "Crochet Coral Reef" (2005–present).

Yale University acknowledges that Indigenous peoples and nations, including Mohegan, Mashantucket Pequot Eastern Pequot, Schaghticoke, Golden Hill Paugussett, Niantic, and the Quinnipiac and other Algonquian speaking peoples, have stewarded through generations the lands and waterways of what is now the state of Connecticut. We honor and respect the enduring relationship that exists between these peoples and nations and this land.

Course Director: Siobhan Angus (she/her)

Email: siobhan.angus@yale.edu

F 1:30pm-3:20pm, Loria Center 259

Office Hours: Tuesday 1-2 and Friday 11-12 on Zoom (or by appointment in person)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

There is widespread consensus that we are living in a state of emergency and ecological collapse. This seminar explores how contemporary artists are responding to the Anthropocene, a geological epoch defined by the impacts of human activity on the natural world. The converging crises of our present have revealed how structural inequality has created an uneven distribution of environmental risk along the lines of class, ethnicity, race, and gender. Engaging critical issues in the environmental humanities and focusing on the intersections of environmental and social justice, the course will focus on contemporary art from the 1970s to the present, with attention to how the legacies of colonization, empire, and the transatlantic slave trade shape the present. We will consider how art bears witness to ecological crisis while exploring how arts worldmaking potential might help us imagine more just futures. Through a survey of contemporary art in the Anthropocene, we will critically examine the interface between art, activism, and knowledge production.

The course will include object-based study at the Yale Center for British Art, Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History, the Yale University Art Gallery, and the Beinecke Library as well as field trips to Central Park and the Landscape as Laboratory (dependent on Covid-19 policies).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

10% Active Participation

15% Fieldtrip Reflection (approximately 4 pages)

10% Micro Exhibition proposal

25% Micro Exhibition

10% Final Paper Proposal (one-page summary and one-page preliminary bibliography)

30% Final Paper (approximately 12 pages)

READINGS:

All readings will be available for download from this site. There is no assigned textbook.

The reading guidelines for the course can be found at “[Reading relations](#)” by Max Liboiron of CLEAR Labs

The readings will also be uploaded to Perusal which you can access through our Canvas page. Perusal allows us to annotate readings as a class.

FIELDTRIP REFLECTION:

After our class fieldtrip to Central Park, write a short reflection that critically engages with Robert Smithson’s essay “Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape.” *This assignment is dependent on Yale Covid fieldtrip policies.*

MICRO EXHIBITION:

Design a virtual [micro exhibition](#) using objects and artworks from Yale collections. The micro-exhibition is a public humanities project and the content should be written for a general audience.

FINAL PAPER:

The final assignment requires outside research, though your term paper should make explicit reference to the concepts, artworks, and issues discussed in class. Students may focus on an issue, theme, medium, or artist etc., that has not been substantially covered in class to write a thesis-driven analysis. Researching objects/artworks in the Yale collections is recommended.

Further details for the assignments will be given well in advance of each assignment.

LATE POLICY:

All assignments must be submitted by 11:59pm EST on the day that they are due via the “Assignments” section on Canvas. Extensions are granted only in the case of a Dean’s Excuse received in advance of the deadline. All late papers without legitimate excuse will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each successive day they are not received (i.e. a paper submitted 2 days late goes from an A- to a B). If you have any issues with deadlines, please come speak to me *before* the assignment is due.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

All work submitted in this class must be yours alone. The strength of this university depends on the academic and personal integrity of every student. Academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism (i.e., the copying or paraphrasing of words or ideas that are not your own) will not be tolerated in any form. Plagiarism includes submitting the same essay in two different courses, improperly collaborating on assignments, and proper citations. Please be sure to document and cite all your source material in your written work. A paper will receive a higher grade if it draws responsibly on existing sources, and above all, if it is the result of your own reflections and original thoughts. A plagiarized assignment will automatically

receive a failing grade and will be handled according to the [Academic Honesty Policy of Yale University](#). Please consult the [Writing Center Web Site](#) for further information.

A NOTE ON ATTENDANCE:

If you feel any flu, cold, or Covid-19 related symptoms, please stay home until symptoms clear and contact me so we may make alternate arrangements for you during this time. More information about Yale's Covid guidelines can be found [here](#).

If you need a mental health day, please take it. I encourage you to let me know—preferably before but after is also fine—but you do not have to share specifics or justifications. If you are struggling, contact Yale Health's [Mental Health & Counseling](#) which also has resources for dealing with Covid-19 related issues. A list of other resources can be found [here](#).

A NOTE ON ACCESSIBILITY:

Registering with [Student Accessibility Services](#) is the first step to request a disability-related accommodation or service. Accommodations are determined on an individualized basis to enable equitable access to a course or academic program. Once you have registered with SAS, you will receive a letter outlining your accommodations. This letter should be sent to me as soon as possible so that I can integrate the accommodations into the course. If there are any ongoing issues, please bring them to my attention. I recognize that wearing masks to prevent the spread of Covid-19 may escalate accessibility issues, and if this is the case, I will do my best to make alternative arrangements.

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION GUIDELINES:

The material in this course (reading, artworks, discussion) covers content that may be powerful, disturbing, and may re-stimulate upsetting experiences from people's past. While we will do our best not to include material that will be triggering, difficult subjects may be discussed. In light of this, I ask everyone adhere to the following community discussion guidelines to facilitate a safe and generative context to work through some of the most pressing ethical issues of our time. The guidelines are adapted from a list compiled by T.J. Demos at UCSC based on nonviolence communication strategies and guidelines written by Lynn Weber at the University of South Carolina, later modified by Regina Langhout and her psychology students at Wesleyan University as well as Leslie López and her community studies students at UCSC. *If you have suggestions or revisions, please let me know.*

- We create a safe atmosphere for open discussion, where everyone has an equal right to speak, and a responsibility to listen. Personal comments will not be repeated outside the classroom.
- We understand that we cannot always predict which material or words may be triggering to individuals, although we will strive to educate ourselves to be respectful and sensitive to others in our communication.
- We will assume that people are always trying to do the best they can—this includes ourselves.
- We will remind ourselves and each other that making mistakes is a normal part of being alive and is essential for learning. Therefore, we should actively seek out, recognize, and celebrate our mistakes no less than we do our moments of “correctness” because these show our places for growth. Recognizing the limits of our knowing is the first step to truly learning. Learning is about process.
- We will engage rigorously with the subject matter and each other but we will do so with the knowledge that we all here to build a better world. Building better worlds requires us to generously imagine how things could be otherwise, and imagining otherwise requires goodwill and generosity. We will thoughtfully engage with the material and we will not tear apart readings or each other opinions.

- We will not play devil’s advocate. We will think out loud, take intellectual risks, be wrong, and change our minds – but we do so from a place of goodwill.
- We will share information about our perspectives or groups with other members of the class if we so desire, and we will never demean, devalue, or in any way put down people for their experiences. This does not mean we are spokespersons for our own group and we will not interpret other people’s comments as if they are.
- We do not assume we know other people’s complete identities, because these are always meshed with unique personal histories, and some aspects of people’s lives may be invisible to us, or unavailable for sharing in our environment. We are not entitled to know people’s histories and we refrain from asking personal questions that may make people uncomfortable.
- We encourage attacking problems, not people. Let’s acknowledge differing perceptions, empathize with others’ emotional investments, and practice respectful and sensitive communication—even if we ultimately disagree. Disagreement is important. Let’s not allow conflict to turn into abuse, blame, or dismissal.
- If you’re someone who tends to *not* speak a lot, please move up into a role of speaking more. If you tend to speak a lot, please move up into a role of listening more. Whether we are learning to make space or learning to find our voices, we are demonstrating growth to ourselves and others. Remember that active participation takes many forms.
- If discussion becomes too heated, emotional, and antagonistic, we will take a break. If you feel the need to take a break, you may do so without instructor permission.
- We recognize that the last year has been difficult for everyone, so we extend grace to others and practice compassion with ourselves.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS:

September 3rd is a Monday session.

Week 1: Introduction (September 10)

Explore: [Virtual Walking Tour](#), [An African American, Indigenous, and Latinx Peoples' History of New Haven](#), [A Peoples' History of Dixwell](#), and [A Peoples' History of the Hill](#)

[“What is the Anthropocene?”](#) *The Feral Atlas*

Max Liboiron, [“Reading relations,”](#) CLEAR Labs

Week 2: The Anthropocene and Nature | Class Visit to Peabody (September 17)

Alan C. Braddock and Karl Kusserow, “Introduction,” in *Nature’s Nation: American Art and Environment*, eds. Alan C. Braddock and Karl Kusserow (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 2018) 12-39.

Robin Kelsey, “Ecology, Sustainability, and Historical Interpretation,” *American Art* 28, no. 3 (2014): 8-13.

Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature” in *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, (Verso, 1980) 67-85.

Rachael Z. DeLue, “Art and Science in America,” *American Art* 23.2 (Summer 2009): 2-9.

Zoe Todd, [“Fish, Kin and Hope: Tending to Water Violations in amiskwaciwâskahikan and Treaty Six Territory,”](#) *Afterall* 43 (2017): 103-107.

Week 3: Land and Landscape | Class visit to YUAG (September 24)

“Empire,” “Invasion,” and “The Great Dying of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas,” *The Feral Atlas*

Jennifer Raab, *Frederic Church: The Art and Science of Detail* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 123-146.

Katherine Nova McLeary and Leah Tamar Shrestinian, “Entangled Pasts, Collaborative Futures: Reimagining Indigenous North American Art at Yale,” in *Place, Nations, Generations, Beings: 200 Years of Indigenous North American Art* (Yale University Art Gallery, 2019) 17-36.

Jolene Rickard, “Arts of Dispossession,” in *Picturing the Americas: Landscape Painting from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic*, edited by P. Brownlee, V. Piccoli, and G. Uhlyarik (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 114-119.

Ruth Phillips and Mark Salber Phillips, “Revisioning History,” *Kent Monkman: Revision and Resistance: mistikôsimak (Wooden Boat People)*, (The Art Canada Institute, 2020) 59-82.

Week 4: Environmental Justice | Class visit to the Beinecke (October 1)

“Principles of Environmental Justice,” First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991

Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 197-222

Nicholas Mirzoeff “It’s Not the Anthropocene, It’s the White Supremacy Scene; or, The Geological Color Line,” In *After Extinction*, edited by Richard A. Grusin (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 123-150.

Kyle Whyte, “Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Justice,” *Environment and Society* (2018): 125–144.

LaToya Ruby Frazier, “Flint is Family,” “A Creative Solution for the Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan,” and “A Visual History of Inequality in Industrial America”

MICRO-EXHIBITION PROPOSAL DUE

Week 5: The Capitalocene and the Plantationocene | Class visit to YCBA (October 8)

Anna Arabindan-Kesson, “Of Vision and Value: Landscape and Labor after Slavery,” in *Black Bodies, White Gold* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021) 121-170.

Kathryn Yusoff, “White Utopia/Black Inferno: Life on a Geologic Spike,” *e-flux*, Journal #97 - February 2019

“Sven Beckert, Capital,” “Capital,” and “Thrives with the Plantation Condition,” *The Feral Atlas*,

“New light on the group portrait of Elihu Yale, his family, and an enslaved child.” Yale Center for British Art

Week 6: The Human Transformed Environment | Class visit to Central Park (October 15)

Robin Kelsey, “Sierra Club Photography and the Exclusive Property of Vision,” *RCC Perspectives* no. 1 (2013): 11–26.

Robert Smithson, “Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape,” 1973, 116-128.

Joanna Fiduccia, “Lacks Worth Having: William Pope.L and Land Art,” *Shift* (2015): 6-22.

Antonia Rigaud, "Disorienting Geographies: Land Art and the American Myth of Discovery," *Miranda* 6 (2012): 1-16.

NO CLASS ON OCTOBER 22 - OCTOBER RECESS

Week 7: Eco-Feminism and Queer Ecologies | (October 29)

Nancy Spero, "Tracing Ana Mendieta," *Artforum* (April 1992): 75-77.

Lucy R. Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges: the Contribution of Feminism to Art of the 1970s," *Art Journal* (Fall/Winter 1980): 362-365.

Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, "Unnatural Passions?: Notes Toward a Queer Ecology," in *Invisible Culture*, Issue 9, 2005.

Eleanor Heartney, "How the ecological art practices of today were born in 1970s Feminism," *Art in America*, May 22, 2020.

Week 8: Animals and Multi-Species Entanglement | Class visit to YCBA (November 5)

John Berger, "Why We Look at Animals," in *About Looking* (London: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1984)

Jason Weems, "Scale, A Slaughterhouse View," in *Scale*, edited by Jennifer Roberts (Terra Foundation Essays, Volume 2) 106-143.

Cajetan Iheka, Chapter 4, *African EcoMedia*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021)

MICRO-EXHIBITION DUE

Week 9: Plants (November 12)

Macarena Gómez-Barris, "Into the Heart of the Occupied Forest," in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*, 79-88.

Ashley Dawson, "Decolonizing the Seed Commons: Biocapitalism, Agroecology, and Visual Culture," in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*, 322-331.

Emily Eliza Scott, "Botanical Time Travel to Unspectacular Climatic Futures" *Climate Garden 2085: A Do-it-Yourself Manual*, eds. Manuela Dahinden and Juanita Schläpfer-Miller (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess/Park Books, 2017), 20-23.

Natasha Myers, "How to grow livable worlds: Ten not-so-easy steps," in *The World to Come*, edited by Kerry Oliver Smith (Gainesville, Florida: Harn Museum of Art, 2018), 53-63.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, Selections from *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Milkweed Editions, 2013.

Week 11: Post-War Consumer Culture, Waste, and Plastics (November 19)

"Acceleration," Will Steffen, "The Great Acceleration: The Collision of Human and Earth History," and Karen Ho, "Finance," *The Feral Atlas*

Excerpts from Max Liboiron, *Pollution is Colonialism* (Duke University Press, 2021)

Roland Barthes, "Plastic," in *Mythologies* (London, Paladin, 1972), 193-195.

Patricia C. Phillips, "Making Necessity Art," in *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art* (Prestel: 2016)

Pieter Hugo, "Permanent Error," *Etnofoor*, vol. 24 (2012) 105-116

FINAL PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

NO CLASS ON NOVEMBER 26 - NOVEMBER RECESS

Week 11: Carceral, Military, and Abolition Ecologies (December 3)

"Amitav Ghosh, Empire" *The Feral Atlas*

Nicole Fleetwood, "Carceral Aesthetics," *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Harvard University Press, 2020), 21-54.

Sara Mameni, "On the Terracene," in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Climate Change*, 100-107.

Watch: TJ Demos, "Racial Capitalocene: Ecology and Abolition," *British Art and Natural Forces*, Paul Mellon Center for British Art, 2020.

Week 12: Apocalypse, Extinction, Futures (December 10)

David Wallace-Wells, "The Uninhabitable Earth," *New York Magazine*, July 10, 2017.

Alan C. Braddock and Karl Kusserow, "The Big Picture: American Art and Planetary Ecology" in *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment*, 357-391.

T.J. Demos, "The Great Transition: The Arts and Radical System Change," in *Beyond the World's End: Arts of Living at the Crossing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 163-193.

Anna Tsing et al, "Bodies Tumbled Into Bodies," in *The Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, 1-12.

FINAL PAPERS DUE (December 20)