

**POL S 301 WINTER 2016**  
**ANTHROPOCENE POLITICS:**  
**INTEGRATING COSMOPOLITANISM AND GREEN THEORY**

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**Office hours: M 1-3 pm, W 2-3 pm or by appt.**

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**What We Will Study**

For each of the following reasons, the Anthropocene presents us with the problem of all problems:

- It was a colossal accident, an unintended consequence of everyday life for over seven billion of us.
- These daily choices are strongly driven by an amalgamation of psychological and institutional forces with deep historical and even biological roots.
- The actions of a few of us are far greater drivers than are those of most us, but our lower-impact members are quickly adopting the habits of the affluent.

Taken alone, each of these factors presents a conundrum; taken together, they suggest the need for new forms of politics that integrate concerns for global justice and ecological responsibility. This course will explore the following themes, with a special focus on climate change, the biodiversity crisis and the world food system:

- the intersection of human rights and ecological sustainability
- intergenerational ethics
- animal ethics
- localism/globalism
- citizenship and consumerism
- personal agency and global governance

While these issues can be illuminated by empirical and theoretical study, so too can we investigate them through personal and interpersonal introspection, for our complicity in the Anthropocene implies that each of us must answer the question, "Who am I in relation to this?" Rather than studying issues like climate change, the extinction crisis and world food challenges as happening only "out there," we will view them as also happening "in here" by continually asking ourselves, "Who am I in relation to this?" This holistic approach involves integrating cognitive learning with affective and somatic awareness through reflective and contemplative exercises and community service.

**What You Will Learn**

If you participate actively in this course, including grasping content from lectures and readings, engaging yourself dynamically in quiz sections, and writing thoughtful papers, I expect that you will improve your skillfulness in many arenas, most especially the following:

- Critical and integrative thinking skills about some of the most important issues of our day, especially climate change
- Cognitive, emotional, and somatic self-awareness
- Your ability to articulate ideas and feelings about these issues, in writing and conversation
- Your ability to listen to, understand, empathize and collaborate with others who do not necessarily share your opinions and beliefs
- Your sense of what it means to be a human being living at this moment in history
- Your sense of social and political agency

## Course requirements:

- Intensive reading on the human and biophysical dimensions of the Anthropocene (100-150 pages/week)
- Active participation in seminar discussions
- A daily reflective or contemplative practice
- Writing in both a private journal and a public blog
- Weekly meetings with your “study/action group”
- A community service project with your study/action group
- A rough draft and final paper on Anthropocene politics (topic TBA)

## Course Grading

Participation	25%
Week 3 journal submission	10%
Week 7 journal submission	10%
Blog participation	10%
Action group proposal	5%
Action project paper (indiv)	10%
Final paper	
Rough draft	10%
Final draft	20%

## What You Will Do

**Participation:** What you learn depends upon what you do. Please bring your **full presence** to class, having read the associated materials beforehand.

**Journaling:** In order to help you assimilate the course material as well personalize it, you will keep a personal journal and write in it for at least one hour each week. I encourage you to get yourself a beautiful journal: something with real paper, something that will inspire you, something you can bring outside. While this is a personal journal, you will have three opportunities to share some of your work. First, you will select passages you wish to share with me and submit them in the third and seventh weeks of the quarter. Second, you may choose to publish some of your writings on our course blog. Third, you may find yourself weaving sections of your journal into your final paper.

**Course blog:** You will be responsible for writing at least one entry in our course blog. (Details TBA)

**Study/action groups:** You will participate in a study/action group of 4-6 students. The group’s purpose is threefold. First, it will help you assimilate and deepen your connection to the course material in a smaller social setting than the class. Second, your group will experiment with contemplative practices—either those introduced in class or others. Third, your group will engage in a community service or educational project that you decide upon and implement collectively.

**Bringing it to the polis:** In our exploration of Anthropocene politics, we will be engaged in deep introspection and sharing. Yet, our study would be incomplete if we did not bring it into the wider collective—hence the study/action groups. These projects will reflect your group’s interests and passions. You will also write a short paper (3 pages) about your contribution to your group’s project.

**Final paper:** The final requirement for this course is an 8-10 page paper addressing how the Anthropocene might shape our understanding of a core concept in political theory, such as freedom, justice, citizenship, governance, power, agency, or progress. Students wishing to receive ‘W’ credit will submit a rough draft in the eighth week of the quarter.

## Required Texts (in order of usage)

Christian Schwägerl (2014) *The Anthropocene: The Human Era and How It Shapes Our Planet*. Synergetic Press.

Jane Bennett (2010) *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*. Duke University Press.

Chris Johnstone and Joanna Macy (2012) *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in Without Going Crazy*. New World Library.

Electronic readings on Canvas

### **About plagiarism**

Please do not succumb to the temptation to use another author's words or ideas without proper citation. The same tools that make it easy for students to plagiarize in today's information age also make it easy for instructors to detect plagiarism. And, even if one is not caught, any marginal benefit gained is greatly outweighed by the harm inflicted upon one's own character. In a nutshell, the university's rules on plagiarism will be strictly enforced in this class. Papers will be submitted on Canvas and the Turnitin function will be enabled.

### **Late assignments**

Late assignments are not accepted without a medical excuse. All requests on these matters must be made through me, preferably before the due date.

### **Disabled Student Provisions**

If you wish to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924. If you have letter from DSS indicating that you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please present it to me.

### **Recommended Texts**

David Abram. *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*. (Vintage, 2011).

Diane Ackerman. *The Human Age: The World Shaped by Us*. (Norton, 2014).

Thomas Berry. *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (Bell Tower, 1999).

Deane Curtin. *Environmental Ethics for a Postcolonial World* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

G. Porter, J.W. Brown, and P. Chasek, *Global Environmental Politics* (6<sup>th</sup> edition), (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013).

Charles Eisenstein. *Sacred Economics: Money, Gift and Society in the Age of Transition* (North Atlantic, 2011).

Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (Longman, 2000).

Gay Hawkins, *The Ethics of Waste* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization* Island Press, 2006.

Sikhina Jinna and Simon Nicholson, eds. *New Earth Politics*. MIT Press (forthcoming).

Naomi Klein. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (Simon & Schuster, 2015).

Elizabeth Kolbert. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (Picador, 2015).

Carter Phipps. *Evolutionaries: Unlocking the Spiritual and Cultural Potential of Science's Greatest Idea*. Harper Perennial. 2012.

Thomas Princen. *The Logic of Sufficiency* (MIT Press, 2005).

Thomas Princen, Michael Maniates and Ken Conca (eds.), *Confronting Consumption* (MIT Press, 2002).

Jedediah Purdy. *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Harvard University Press, 2015).

Leslie Sponsel. *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*. (Praeger, 2012).

Chris Uhl. *Developing Ecological Consciousness: The End of Separation*. (Rowman and Littlefield 2013).

Paul Wapner. *Living Through the End of Nature: The Future of American Environmentalism*. (MIT Press 2013).

## SCHEDULE of READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS

- 1/4 Introduction: New Directions for Politics in the Anthropocene  
No readings
- 1/6 Welcome to the Anthropocene  
**READ:** Schwägerl, pp. ix-69.  
Sara Schley, [Sustainability: Inner and Outer Work](#)
- Recommended:  
McKibben, Global Warming's Terrifying New Math  
<http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719>
- NPR interview with Elizabeth Kolbert, [In The World's 'Sixth Extinction,' Are Humans The Asteroid?](#)
- 1/11 Making Connections  
**READ:** Donella Meadows, [“Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System”](#)  
Sandhya Johnson, [“Thinking in systems” Slideshare](#)  
Langdon Winner, [“Earth’s Water Crisis from Space”](#)  
MacNeill, “Shadow Ecologies”  
Michael Maniates, “Individualization”
- DO: Calculate your ecological footprint at  
<http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>
- Recommended: John Richardson, When the End of Civilization is Your Day Job  
<http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a36228/ballad-of-the-sad-climatologists-0815/>
- 1/13 The Human Face(s) of the Anthropocene  
**READ:** Scientific American, [“Climate Change Hastened Syria's Civil War”](#)  
Tikkun, [“Mourning the Suffering of the Refugees”](#)  
Frank Biermann, [“Climate Change and the Next Migration Crisis”](#)  
Timothy Snyder, [“The Next Genocide”](#)  
Christian Parenti, [“Flower of War”](#)
- 1/20 Anthropogenic Ecosystems  
**READ:** Schwägerl, Chapters 5-9 (pp. 70-174).  
Peter Kahn, “Environmental Generational Amnesia”  
WATCH IN STUDY/ACTION GROUPS: [“Home”](#)
- 1/22 FIRST JOURNAL SUBMISSION ON CANVAS
- 1/24 PLEASE BE SURE THAT YOU HAVE POSTED TO THE COURSE BLOG AT LEAST ONCE
- 1/25 The Inner Landscape of the Anthropocene  
**READ:** Dickinson, J. L. 2009. The people paradox: self-esteem striving, immortality ideologies, and human response to climate change. *Ecology and Society* 14(1): 34.

- Samantha Frost, "Fear and the Illusion of Autonomy" from Diana Coole and S. Frost (eds.) *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. (Duke University Press, 2010), pp.158-177.  
 Renee Lertzmann, "[The Myth of Apathy](#)"  
 Timothy Withbrow, "[Dangerously Addictive](#)" from Daniel Lerch (ed.) *The PostCarbon Reader*  
 Karen Litfin, "The Sacred and the Profane in the Ecological Politics of Sacrifice" in Meyer and Maniates (eds.) *The Environmental Politics of Sacrifice*. (MIT Press, 2010).
- 1/27 Nature/human  
**READ:** Damian White, Alan Rudy, and Brian Gareau, *Environments, Natures and Social Theory*. (Palgrave, 2015), Introduction and Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-51.
- 2/1 Rethinking Materialism  
**READ:** Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, Preface and Chapters 1-3 (pp. vii-xix and 1-51).  
 IN-CLASS VIDEO: "Journey of the Universe"
- 2/3 Rethinking Power and Agency  
**READ:** Bennett, Chapters 4-end.
- ACTION/GROUP PROPOSALS DUE (Group project)
- 2/8 The New Eco(logy/nomy)  
**READ:** Schwägerl, Chapter 10 (pp. 174-190)  
 David Loy, "Religion of the Market"  
 Naomi Klein, "The Changes Everything"  
 Charles Eisenstein, "Sacred Economics"
- 2/10 Anthropocene Politics and Anti-Politics  
**READ:** Schwägerl, Chapter 11 (pp. 191-205)  
 Jedediah Purdy, *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene*, Prologue & Introduction (pp. 1-50)
- 2/14 SECOND JOURNAL SUBMISSION ON CANVAS
- 2/17 Learning from the Paris Accord  
**READ:** Purdy, *After Nature*, Chapter 7 (pp. 228-255).  
 Other readings TBA
- 2/22 The Noosphere and the Anthropocene  
**READ:** Thomas Berry, "The University" (Chapter 7, *The Great Work*)  
 Evelyn Fox Keller, "Dynamic Objectivity: Love, Power, and Knowledge" (from *Gender and Science*)  
 Jeremy Rifkin, *Empathic Civilization*, Part I
- 2/19 FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE ON CANVAS
- 2/24 Coming to Our Senses  
 David Abram, *Becoming Animal* (selections)
- 2/29 Anthropocene Politics: Visions of the Future  
**READ:** White, Rudy and Gareau, Chapters 9-10 (pp. 176-212)  
 Schwägerl, Chapter 12 and Epilogue (pp. 206-227)

- 3/2 ACTION PROJECT PRESENTATIONS (Group)
- 3/4 ACTION PROJECT PAPERS DUE ON CANVAS
- 3/7 The Personal is Political  
**READ:** Macy and Johnstone, *Active Hope*, Parts 1-2
- 3/9 Going Forth: Person/Planet Praxis  
**READ:** *Active Hope*, Part 3
- 3/15 FINAL PROJECTS DUE ON CANVAS