English 104: Introduction to Fiction, Climate Change Fiction
CRN 22038, Winter 2015
MWF 12:00-12:50 pm, Allen 140
Course website: http://blogs.uoregon.edu/eng104/

Instructor: Stephen Siperstein
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Office Hours: M 1:00-2:00 & F 10:00-12:00
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Course Overview

This course offers an introduction to the study of literature by focusing on the emerging genre of climate change fiction (popularly known as "cli-fi"). Throughout the term, we will be investigating how fictional texts can suggest new ways for thinking about climate change and even afford opportunities for imagining more just and resilient futures. That is, we will consider the question: how and why does fiction, and specifically literary fiction, matter in the context of climate change? To pursue such an investigation, we will analyze the specific formal and stylistic conventions of literary and cultural texts and situate those texts within broader debates and discourses—scientific, historical, and political—about climate change. Specifically, we will read a range of short stories and novels, analyzing how features like point of view, characterization, and figurative language enhance the effects that those stories produce on their readers. We will also compare these literary texts to radical forms of fiction—like multiple-authored graphic novels, podcasts, and even alternate reality games—and will thus consider the extent to which different cultural forms shape the ways that people see, understand, and relate to the world. Overall then, this course focuses on developing the necessary tools and skills for thinking, writing, and speaking critically about *both* literature *and* climate change.

**Please note: This course satisfies credits toward the Arts & Letters category general education requirement. However, these credits do not count toward the English major.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to help you learn key concepts and skills in literary studies so that you can engage fiction and climate change in meaningful, transformative ways. If you invest yourself fully, you should finish the course being able to:

- Read, summarize, and analyze complex fictional texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions—both formal and stylistic;
- Draw on relevant political, historical, and scientific information to situate literary and cultural texts within wider debates and discourses about climate change;
- Identify how literary and cultural texts complement or challenge other understandings of climate change;
- Reflect on and critically analyze your own understandings of and feelings about climate change and the future;
- Employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce persuasive and imaginative arguments about literature, culture, and climate change;

Required Texts & Materials

The following texts and materials are required for this course. All other readings listed on the schedule will be posted on our course blog site.

- Maslin, Mark. *Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction, Third Edition*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014. ISBN: 9780198719045

- McKibben, Bill, ed. *I'm With the Bears: Short Stories From a Damaged Planet*. London: Verso, 2011. ISBN: 9781844677443
- Mina, Denise, ed. *IDP: 2043*. Glasgow: Freight Books, 2014. ISBN: 9781908754639
- Rich, Nathaniel. *Odds Against Tomorrow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013. ISBN: 9781250043641
- A dedicated lined notebook to use as a reading journal
- When using a dictionary for this course, you should use the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), which is available online through the UO Library website: www.oed.com.libproxy.uoregon.edu
- You will need to have an UO email address to access our course blog site and to receive course related emails and announcements. You should use your UO email for all course related correspondence.

Required Assignments and Grading Percentages

Engagement	10 %
Reading journal	10 %
Course blog	10 %
Reading quizzes	15 %
Close reading essay assignment	15 %
Midterm exam	15 %
Final project (including essay assignment & presentation)	25 %

Grading Scale (%)	
93+	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
80-82.99	B-
77-79.99	C+
73-76.99	C
70-72.99	C-
67-69.99	D+
63-66.99	D
60-62.99	D-
Below 60	F

Engagement 10%: Being engaged in this course is predicated on consistent attendance and timeliness, and coming to class having closely read and considered the assigned material. But more than this, "engagement" entails frequently contributing your ideas and your voice to class discussions. I recognize that it is often difficult to speak up in a classroom setting; we all sometimes get nervous, become unsure of ourselves, question if our ideas are valuable or worthy of being said. These feelings are understandable, and because of them, participation is something that takes a great deal of practice. Thus, after every class meeting I will record a grade for your daily participation:

> F=present but without book/readings; D=present with books/readings and basically attentive; C=contributing when called upon to class discussion; B=voluntarily contributing to class discussion and able to respond thoughtfully to questions about readings; A=voluntarily asking questions, engaging with ideas of fellow classmates, and offering responses to the readings that show insight and appreciation.

There are other ways to demonstrate your engagement as well. Be an active participant on the course blog by commenting or posting more than the required amount. Be a leader in small group work or in-class activities. Stop by office hours or set up additional appointments with me to ask questions or to share your ideas. All of these are forms of engagement.

Reading journal 10%: Keeping a reading journal will provide you an opportunity to write regularly and to practice the art of critical, close, and slow reading. You will use your journal as a space to keep track of your responses to the course readings as well as your evolving thoughts and feelings about climate change. In addition to occasional in-class entries, which I will assign on an as needed basis, you will write *at least* three entries outside of class every week corresponding to the three days of class, *at least* 300 words per entry. Occasionally, I will ask that you respond to specific prompts or questions in your journal entries. Throughout the term, I will collect your journals periodically and unannounced ahead of time. Thus, you need to bring your journal with you to every class session.

Course blog 10%: Throughout the term, you will contribute posts to our course blog website (four significant posts, at least 500 words each, over the course of the term), as well as respond to your classmates' posts. The course blog will be a place for us to test out ideas, engage in discussion with each other outside of class, and share texts and materials not included on the course syllabus. (Course blog site: http://blogs.uoregon.edu/eng104/)

Reading quizzes 15%: Over the course of the term you will take daily quizzes based on important ideas and details from the assigned readings and class discussions. Quizzes are a way for you to practice the skills of literary analysis (and prepare for the midterm exam and essay assignments) and a means for me to check your comprehension. Quizzes usually will occur during the first ten minutes of class and cannot be made up if you are absent. At the end of the term I will drop your lowest quiz grade.

Close reading essay assignment 15%: The first formal writing assignment (besides the blog) will be a paper of approximately four pages. It will involve close reading one or more specific passages from the assigned course texts, and will require that you practice the skills that you will develop further in the midterm exam and final essay project.

Midterm exam 15%: The midterm exam will be based on course readings, key terms, and class discussions, and will likely include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. I will offer make-up exams only in documented cases of emergency.

Final project assignment 25%: For this final writing assignment, you will produce or propose a work of climate change fiction that draws on some of the literary, narrative, and fictional strategies employed by the texts and writers that we have studied throughout the term. You will then write a close-reading/literary analysis of your own creative work, analyzing its formal, stylistic, and thematic features and explaining how it relates to at least two of our course texts. Taken together, the two written parts of this assignment together will be a paper of approximately 8-10 pages. You will also prepare and give a presentation to the class on your own work of climate change fiction. I will distribute more detailed assignment guidelines as the due date approaches.

Course Policies

Communication: One of the goals of our class discussions and our writing is to communicate with each other more effectively. As follows, I strongly encourage you to communicate with me so that I can be in a position to understand your goals, questions, frustrations, and successes. If you are feeling particularly unsure of your work, if you ever find my comments on your assignments confusing or inconsistent, if you are having difficulties that affect your work, please come speak with me.

Attendance: Your regular attendance is vital to succeeding in this course. You may miss three classes without penalty. Absences for any reason, including illness, sporting events, or University-related activities, will count towards these three allowed absences. Arriving late to class or leaving class early will count as one half absence. See me if you have questions about whether or not you've been marked "late" so that you can keep track of your attendance record. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, you must still arrange to hand in that assignment on the scheduled due date. Each subsequent absence, after the first three, will result in your overall course grade dropping by a letter grade (A to A- to B+ to B, etc) *unless you have contacted me well in advance, and we have agreed on alternative arrangements*. **Tip:** I have noticed that many students skip class when they have not had time to finish the reading or complete an assignment; this is not a good strategy. Although the course requires that you to do the reading for our class every day and come ready to turn in your assignments, you should not skip class when you are unprepared. Skipping because you are behind only sets you further behind.

Late work: Assignments are due during class on the dates indicated on the attached schedule. Every day an assignment is late (including weekend days), it will be marked down one grade (A to A- to B+ to B, etc). I am willing to consider offering extensions on some assignments if you approach me at least a

week before the due date and propose a plan for how you will complete the work. If you are absent from class, you will need to arrange to get your assignments to me before the beginning of that class period.

Technology in the classroom: Cell phones, tablets, laptops and other personal devices should be turned completely off (not just to "vibrate" or "silent" mode) and put away for the duration of the class. If you use an electronic device during class time, I will mark you absent for that class meeting, even if I do not interrupt class to draw attention to your activity. If you need to use your laptop to take notes because of a documented disability, please discuss this with me at the beginning of the term.

Books in class: This is a literature class, which means we look closely at language and dissect its form and structure. Attending a literature class without your individual book or copy of the text is like going to a chemistry lab without test tubes and chemicals: you can't do the experiment because you don't have the necessary tools. Therefore, **you need to bring assigned readings to class every day**. On days when the assigned reading is from a book, bring the book; on days when the reading is posted on our course blog site, print it out and bring the hardcopy to class. Additionally, you should also always have your reading journal with you in class.

Academic honesty: All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course, which means you may not submit papers or portions of papers you have written for any other course. The use of sources (ideas, paraphrases, quotations) for any of your writing must be properly documented. Academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failing grade for this course. Definitions of cheating and plagiarism are available in the *Student Conduct Code* section on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website. Please familiarize yourself with these if you are not clear on what constitutes cheating or plagiarism and contact me if you have any questions about these definitions. If you are ever having trouble writing a paper or understanding what I am looking for, please come talk with me. I do not expect that you already know how to do what we are learning how to do in this class. Extra help is always available. There is nothing wrong with getting something wrong – often the best way to learn is to make mistakes, and this is not something to panic about. However, if you take ideas from elsewhere and pass them off as your own, you learn nothing—so the next paper will therefore be no easier—and risk extreme academic penalties.

Access: The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please tell me in week one if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You may also want to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall, at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Schedule

The following schedule may change throughout the term.

Assignments and readings due the day listed. *IWTB=I'm With the Bears* short story collection. *OAT=Odds Against Tomorrow*. *CCI=Climate Change, A Very Short Introduction.* Blog=document or link posted on course blog.

Week 1

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Jan 5		
Wednesday, Jan 7	"Introduction," Bill McKibben (*IWTB*) "What Is Climate Change?" (*CCI,* 1-11)	Climate change survey & favorite story assignment
Friday, Jan 9	"A Fable For Tomorrow," Rachel Carson (Blog) "Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet," Margaret Atwood (*IWTB*)	Join course blog (you will receive an email from me inviting you to join)

Week 2

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Jan 12	"Climate Change Impacts," (*CCI*, 68-86) "Evidence for Climate Change," (*CCI*, 44-45) Explore the Global Weirding project (Blog) Research present or future climate change impacts in your own community	Local impacts reading journal entry
Wednesday, Jan 14	"Diary of an Interesting Year," Helen Simpson (*IWTB)* "The Tamarisk Hunter," Paolo Bacigalupi (*IWTB*)	
Friday, Jan 16	"The Siphoners," David Mitchell (*IWTB)*	Group A: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, Jan 15. Everyone: two comments to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 3

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Jan 19	NO CLASS: MLK Holiday	
Wednesday, Jan 21	"The Weatherman," Holly Howitt (Blog) Article on ethics of responding to climate change (Blog) "Solutions," (*CCI*, 136-164)	
Friday, Jan 23	"Earthship," Lawrence Norfolk (Blog)	Group B: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, Jan 22. Everyone: two comments to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 4

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Jan 26	"An Athabasca Story," Warren Cariou (Blog) Article on the Alberta tar sands	
Wednesday, Jan 28	"Meat," A.L. Kennedy (Blog) Article on meat consumption and climate change (Blog)	
Friday, Jan 30	"What Is Left To See?" James Miller (Blog) "Arzestula," Wu Ming 1 (*IWTB*)	Group A: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, Jan 29. Everyone: two comments to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 5

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Feb 2	IDP: 2043, pp. 7-61 Handout on reading comics (Blog) Article on agribusiness and climate change (Blog)	Close reading essay assignment due
Wednesday, Feb 4	IDP: 2043, 62-139 Article on climate change and displacement (Blog)	
Friday, Feb 6	IDP: 2043, 140-end	Group B: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, Feb 5. Everyone: two comments to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 6

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Feb 9		Midterm exam
Wednesday, Feb 11	*Odds Against Tomorrow,* pp. 1-44 Article on cli-fi by Nathaniel Rich (Blog)	
Friday, Feb 13	*OAT*, 45-91 Article on neoliberalism/speculations market (Blog)	

Week 7

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Feb 16	*OAT*, 92-148 Articles and media on Hurricane Sandy (Blog)	

Wednesday, Feb 18	*OAT,* 149-198	
Friday, Feb 20	*OAT*, 199-229	Group A: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, Feb 19. Everyone: two comments to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 8

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, Feb 23	*OAT*, 230-267	
Wednesday, Feb 25	*OAT,* 267-306 Article on occupy movement and its relation to climate change movement (Blog)	
Friday, Feb 27	Read articles and explore media on *FutureCoast* project (Blog)	Group B: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, Feb 26. Everyone: two comments to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 9

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, March 2	Read articles and explore media on the *After Water* podcast project (Blog)	
Wednesday, March 4	Read articles and explore media on Climate Change storytelling projects (Blog)	
Friday, March 6	TBD	Everyone: blog post due by 8 PM, Thursday, March 5. Everyone: one comment to classmates' blog posts due before class time today.

Week 10

	Reading Due	**Assignments Due**
Monday, March 9	Selection from *A Visit From the Goon Squad,* Jennifer Egan (Blog) *New York Times Room for Debate* on Cli-Fi	
Wednesday, March 11		Group B: final project presentations
Friday, March 13		Group A: final project presentations Final project assignment due