



## **CIEE Global Institute – Paris**

<b>Course name:</b>	Nature and Culture in Transnational Perspective
<b>Course number:</b>	(GI) ENVI 2004 PAFR
<b>Programs offering course:</b>	Open Campus
<b>Open Campus Track:</b>	Sustainability and Environmental Sciences
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>U.S. semester credits:</b>	3
<b>Contact hours:</b>	45
<b>Term:</b>	Spring 2020

### **Course Description**

This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to contemporary environmental issues. Specifically, it addresses how the humanities, different art forms, popular media, and knowledge cultures are vital to debates about the environment. The course engages with the emerging transnational discussion of issues such as toxic waste, climate change, fracking, and the role of genetically modified plants and animals in agriculture by exploring their philosophical, political, and artistic implications. The unique comparative opportunities that emerge in the context of international education are emphasized by fostering student interaction with the host culture in order to reach a culturally informed understanding of our shared ecosystem.

### **Learning Objectives**

By completing this course, students will:

- Reach a comprehensive understanding of how “nature” cannot be adequately grasped without a critical reflection on the nature-culture divide, its cultural specificities and national histories.
- Learn how literature, art, and the media impact contemporary conceptions of the ecosystem as gender-, race-, and class-based, and how these conceptions are culturally specific.
- Develop an understanding of the philosophical and, sometimes, ideological, implications that inhere in various representations of the culture-nature divide in movies, advertisements, newspapers, and online media clips.
- Establish a different, potentially deeper relationship to the host culture by interacting with local natural and built environments and seeing various local species up-close, including both animals and plants.
- Learn about how the host culture approaches environmental challenges politically, legally, economically, and through its institutions, and how the world of business and technological research are (re)acting in this framework.



## **Course Prerequisites**

None.

## **Methods of Instruction**

This course is highly interactive and combines discussions (about the texts, films, etc.), in-class group work, and in-class presentations. The more theoretical parts of class sessions will sometimes consist of short lectures as well. Students will be asked to do their own fieldwork (e.g. taking photos, interviewing locals, local organizations, or other students) that will also be discussed in class. Since this course is designed to be highly interactive, students are expected to take part in discussions and debates, which will in most cases not be about “right” or “wrong,” but rather about finding individual and new approaches to framing the ecosystem intellectually, and using plausible arguments to analyze and evaluate the ways humans approach nature and its resources. The overall aim of the course is to learn how to think critically and originally. In order to encourage enquiry-based learning, students will be asked to answer questions, either individually or in groups, about an assigned text, film, initiative, etc. The instructor will use a broad selection of teaching methods including PowerPoint, audio-visual material, guest lectures, excursions, but also personal narrative, group work, and traditional teaching units.

## **Assessment and Final Grade**

Group Presentation	20%
Field Research and Written Analysis	20%
Creative Project	15%
Take-Home Exam	25%
Participation	20%

## **Course Requirements**

**Important: all course assignments must be turned in on time. While students will not be penalized for submissions up to and including 1 hour late,**

- **Students submitting work from 1 hour and 1 minute late up to and including 24 hours late will be penalized 15% from the assignment;**
- **Student work submitted from 24 hours and 1 minute late onwards will receive a zero (0%) grade.**

### **Group Presentation**

Each student is expected (together with one or two other students) to lead a 15-minute group presentation of one particular text, topic, or media example. Two weeks before the presentation, the group meets with the instructor to discuss possible questions. It is



expected that at that point they have all read the assigned text, have thought about the topic, and suggest a question or two. The group then decides which questions to choose, together with the instructor. Following that meeting each presenter\* has time to prepare additional questions/input that s/he will use during the discussion to further inspire the conversation. The presentation also includes a written self-assessment after the event: what went well? What didn't? What would I do differently if I were to do this again? The self-assessment must be submitted on the Monday following the event and will be commented on by the instructor who adds his/her impression of the presentation.

**Please Note:** It is important that you see your instructor at least two weeks before your presentation to discuss possible lead questions, topics, and potential pitfalls. The grade results from the overall quality of the presentation (10%) and the way the presentation is prepared and carried out by each individual student (10%). While the first part of the grade will be the same for all in the group, the second may vary, depending on the individual student's performance.

### **Field Research and Written Analysis**

The course includes two written reflections on two of the field excursions. For each, you are expected to create a 1500-word documentation of the event (that you can, ideally, save as part of a course portfolio and a memory of your time abroad). The documentation for each includes: a summary that describes the site visited (5%), a reflection on what you felt and learnt during the excursion, particularly in the context of differences from your own culture and experience (5%), a critical examination of culture, nature, nationality—but also, potentially, gender, ethnicity, class (5%). Add at least one picture that you took during the excursion and explain the significance of this image (5%). The PDF file must be submitted by the next class session following the site visit.

### **Creative Project**

In this course, you are not only studying literature, the arts, and the environment from an interdisciplinary standpoint, but will try your hand at crafting an individual, creative, response to an environmental topic. Your creative project can be an autobiographical, literary piece, e.g. a poem about the city from an animal's perspective. You can do a trash sculpture to respond to the pollution of the environment. How about a mini land art project for the local community or a digital story? The project will be graded on originality (5%) and artistic quality (5%), as well as on an accompanying 400-word piece (5%), which will discuss the significance of the project and its relation to some of the material discussed in the course. Please note that your project will become part of a final exhibition on your local CIEE campus.

### **Take-home Exam**

The take-home exercise will give students a chance to present what they have learned during this course by answering several short essay questions. Questions will refer to the



concepts discussed in class and students should reference practical examples where appropriate (e.g. a painting, an advertisement, a novel, an education campaign, etc.) and at least one (1) scholarly sources in each response.

## **Participation**

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Reacting to, understanding, and interpreting the various texts, films, and other forms of cultural expression will be the central focus of this class. Film screenings and visits to cultural (campus and/or community) events will be obligatory for all students. Participants will be asked to take notes during visits or screenings. The grade for participation is comprised of the quantity and quality of your contributions to discussions as well as of the performance on in-class writing exercises and classroom activities (writing exercises are designed to sharpen the student's writing skills and to promote the student's engagement with course concepts and texts). Participation grades will be provided on a weekly basis.

A note on preparation: Students are expected to come to every class prepared with the reading—please bring a print-out of the respective text(s).

## **Course Attendance and Punctuality**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all unexcused absences\* may result in a *lower participation grade* for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, unexcused absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning and the final grade for the course will be lowered by 3 percentage points.

\*Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, *excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students will be marked absent.*

Attendance policies *also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event\*, as well as to Internship, Service Learning, or required field placement.*



\*With the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent and unexcused. *No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.*

An absence in a CIEE course will only be considered excused if:

- a doctor's note is provided
- a CIEE staff member verifies that the student was too ill to attend class
- satisfactory evidence is provided of a family emergency

Unexcused absences will lead to the following penalties:

<i>Percentage of Total Course Hours Missed</i>	<i>Equivalent Number of Open Campus Semester classes</i>	<i>Minimum Penalty</i>
Up to 10%	1	Possible reduction of weekly participation grade
10 – 20%	2	Reduction of final grade by 3%; written warning
More than 20%	3	Automatic course failure, and possible expulsion

### **Weekly Schedule**

NOTE: This schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to take advantage of current experiential learning opportunities.

#### **MODULE 1: NATURE AND CULTURE**

Our first two weeks will introduce some general concepts from the field of ecocriticism while focusing on two core concerns: the nature-culture divide in Western thought and the relationship between the local and the planetary.

#### **WEEK 1**

##### **Class 1:1 Introduction**



We will use this first day of class to get to know each other, understand who we are in the context of the larger, cultural, regional and climate-specific ecosystems we individually come from and discuss sustainable cultural alternatives to the status quo. Taking this as a starting point we will go on a stroll to a nearby mixed-used urban precinct and parkland which has recently been re-developed on the site of a former industrial area and brewery in a highly gentrified suburb of inner Sydney.

Neighborhood Site Visit (Batignolles and Clichy): We will wander through a car-free urban oasis, comprising features such as rooftop gardens, green walls, on-site tri-generation plant, water recycling, and striking modern architecture cohabiting with historical buildings. We will learn how high-density urban residential development can simultaneously embrace cultural heritage, sustainable design, reconnection with nature and immersion in the arts, while integrating with a bustling retail and commercial zone.

*Please don't forget to bring a camera and take a picture to document the event.*

## WEEK 2

### **Class 2:1 The Culture-Nature Divide as Departmental Divide**

We will discuss how the nature-culture divide has been a defining part of Western thought and how it has led to a compartmentalization of knowledge in academia (the “humanities” and the “sciences”). Taking this as a starting point we will discuss to what extent it makes sense to distinguish between the local and the planetary.

Reading:

Hughes, A. (2012). “The Folly of Scientism,” *The New Atlantis* 1-19.

<http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-folly-of-scientism>

### **Class 2:2 Sense of Place; Sense of Planet**

In this class we will analyse the concept of ‘eco-cosmopolitanism’ and the dynamic interdependencies between nature and culture as operating on a global scale, while contrasting this approach to eco-localism theory which has tended to dominate environmentalist movements in the Australian context.

Readings:

Heise, U. (2008). “From Blue Planet to Google Earth: Environmentalism, Ecocriticism, and the Imagination of the Global.” *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, pp 17-65.

Optional:

Moscato, D. (2018). “Mediating nature: The global discourses of ecological crisis and Utopia. Book review of ‘Media Commons: Globalization and Environmental Discourses’ by Patrick D Murphy”. *Journal of Communication*, 68, pp 4-7



## MODULE 2: POLITICAL ECOLOGIES: NATURE AND DEMOCRACY

This second unit will focus on the relationship between humans and “nature.” We will attend to our understanding of democracy, along with notions of consumerism and prosperity to develop a “greener” cultural sensibility.

### WEEK 3

#### **Class 3:1 Site Visit at La Recyclerie**

Located in a former train station, Gare d'Ornano, La Recyclerie comprises a café-restaurant and workshops to educate the general public to repair rather than replace. Yet the core of this site, just yards away from the busy car traffic of the Parisian ring road, is its urban farm. It includes composting systems, beehives, an “edible forest” and an indoor jungle as well as a vegetable garden and a chicken coop.

The project provides employment to people long excluded from the labor market, but its intensive outreach also helps a variety of publics (children of all ages and students working on urban agriculture) to better understand concepts such as the cultural significance of food, the restorative and empowering impact of connecting with the food production system, and how community farms and gardens can foster ecological sustainability, partnerships, enterprise, innovation, cultural exchange as well as social integration.

Reading:

Buell. L. (2005). “The Ethics and Politics of Environmental Politics and Criticism.” *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp 97-127.

#### **Class 3:2 Rethinking the Good Life**

This session problematizes some of the ideas that we’ve discussed in the previous session. Is a “return to nature” possible, or desirable? Is salvation to be found in alternative technologies? Or should we, rather, turn to a more sustainable, modest life style?

Reading:

Soper. K. (2016). “Neither the ‘Simple Backward Look’ nor the ‘Simple Progressive Thrust’: Ecocriticism and the Politics of Prosperity,” pp 157-173.

Latour. B. (2004). “What Is to Be Done? Political Ecology!” *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. MA: Harvard UP, pp. 221-230.

**Written analysis of site visit/class 3:1 due by class time.**

Optional:

Take a look at the “Cultures of Consumption Programme.” [www.consume.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.consume.bbk.ac.uk)

### WEEK 4

#### **Class 4:1 Animal Rights; Animal Welfare**

This session focuses a local initiative that connects humans with animals. Several examples of similar enterprises have emerged in various locations around Sydney, however this venue in the inner west suburb of Alexandria, named “The Grounds”, is a restaurant, café, bar, bakery and farmers market which also combines a small animal farm, including various birds and chickens, pigs and sometimes other farm animals. Meanwhile, customers are welcome to bring their dogs into almost all areas of the venue.

During this visit we will consider how we define our relationship with animals and why we consider some to be our friends while others end up on our dinner plates? What is the philosophy behind this, and is there is a more ethical, democratic or sustainable approach to consuming animal products or should we all convert to vegetarianism or veganism?

Reading:

Berger, J. (2009). *Why Look at Animals*, pp 3-28, Penguin Books: England.

Safran Foer, J. (2009). *Eating Animals*. Back Bay Books:NY.

#### **Class 4:2 Rethinking the Ecological Crisis**

In this session, students will conduct their **15-minute Group Presentations**, including class discussion of questions posed by each group.

Readings:

Gonzalez de Molina, M. (2013). “Agroecology and Politics. How to Get Sustainability? About the Necessity for a Political Agroecology”. *Journal of Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*. 37(1) pp 45-59.

Kolbert, E. (2012). Prologue and Welcome to the Anthropocene. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, 5, pp 92-110.

Students will receive the take-home exam questions at the conclusion of this class and will have one week to complete and submit responses.

### **MODULE 3: THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION**

While other sessions have already introduced artwork and literature to explain and discuss our topic this last unit will now focus entirely on the role of literature, art, film, music, and other forms of cultural expression in understanding our connection with the natural world and potentially helping to save the planet.

### **WEEK 5**

#### **Class 5:1 Site Visit: the Musée du Quai-Branly**

In this session we will take an excursion to an immensely popular young museum (2007) that presents artefacts from multiple world cultures--to the exception of the Western world,



for the most part. During this fieldwork, we will thus not only learn to appreciate how some artworks exhibited (re-)articulate the Western division between nature and culture; we will also critically examine the choices in both the scope of collections and exhibitions and in the architectural features of the building, one of the first in France to have adopted a so-called “vegetalized wall”.

Reading:

Simms, A. (2015). “Why climate action needs the arts”. *The Guardian* 4 Jun 2015. Online.

### **Class 5:2 Going Plant-wards: Art and the New Transcendentalism**

In this session, we will further complicate the biopolitical debate and discuss why it is primarily animals, not plants, that we seem to be concerned about whenever we talk about the extinction of species. Yet instead of diving deeply into theory, we will use this session to look further into art history and poetry, where the plant kingdom has always been alive and thriving.

Reading:

Nealon, J. (2016). Coda. *Plant Theory*, pp 109-122.

### **Written analysis of site visit/class 5:1 due by class time.**

Optional Viewing:

Bill Viola. “Owl—I do not know what it is what I’m like.” (YouTube)

### **Class 5:3 Film after Nature**

Disaster films belong to the most widely known, creative responses to natural catastrophes and debates on environmental destruction. In this session, we will review a contemporary disaster movie “A Plastic Ocean”, directed by Australian journalist Craig Leeson.

Reading:

Rigby, K. (2006). “Writing After Nature.” *Australian Humanities Review* 39-40 (Sept. 2006). Online. “Will Fiction Influence How We React to Climate Change?” Room for Debate Blog. *New York Times* 29 July 2015. Online.

### **Due date for Submission of the Take-Home Exam Assessment.**

## **WEEK 6**

### **Class 6:1 The Psychology of Climate Change?**

Commonly perceived as a somewhat gritty part of popular culture, graphic novels have become a major source of inspiration for “serious” readers. In this session, we will discuss “*Don’t Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*” by George Marshall –a novel which explores why, despite overwhelming scientific evidence,



we still ignore climate change. It argues that the root of the problem lies in our evolutionary origins, our perceptions of threats, our cognitive blind-spots, our love of storytelling, our fear of death, and our deep instincts to defend family and tribe. We will then consider the potential role that the arts, communications and media can play in overcoming our tendency toward ecological self-destructionism.

Readings:

George Marshall. *“Don’t Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change”*: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Ghotge, S. (2018). Climate Change and Marx in the Twenty-First Century, Part II. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 29(3), pp 11-20.

### **Class 6:2 Creative Project**

During the final session, students will have time to work on their creative projects and the opportunity to seek additional guidance from the lecturer.

### **Due Date for Submission of the Final Project Assessment.**

## **Course Materials**

### ***Readings***

Berger J. (2009). *Why Look at Animals?* England: Penguin.

Buell, L.(2005). *The Future of Environmental Criticism*. Malden: Blackwell.

Coetzee, J.M. *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Foer, J. S. (2010). *Eating Animals*. New York: Back Bay Books.

Gonzalez de M.M. (2013). “Agroecology and Politics. How to Get Sustainability? About the Necessity for a Political Agroecology”. *Journal of Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*. 37(1) pp 45-59.

Ghotge, S. (2018). “Climate Change and Marx in the Twenty-First Century, Part II”. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*. 29(3), pp 11-20.

Heise, U. (2008). *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Hughes, A. L. (2012). “The Folly of Scientism,” *The New Atlantis* 37, pp 32-50.

Kolbert, E. (2014). *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. London: Bloomsbury.

Latour, B. (2004). *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Marshall, G. (2015). *“Don’t Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change”*: Bloomsbury.

Moscato, D. (2018). "Mediating nature: The global discourses of ecological crisis and Utopia. Book review of 'Media Commons: Globalization and Environmental Discourses' by Patrick D Murphy". *Journal of Communication*. 68, pp 4-7.

Nealon, J. (2015). *Plant Theory: Bio power and Vegetable Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Rigby, K. (2006). "Writing After Nature." *Australian Humanities Review*, pp 39-40.

Simms, A. (2015). "Why climate action needs the arts". *The Guardian* 4 Jun 2015. Online.

Soper K. (2016). "Neither the 'Simple Backward Look' nor the 'Simple Progressive Thrust': Ecocriticism and the Politics of Prosperity" In *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*, edited by Hubert Zapf, 157-173. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

### **Academic Integrity**

CIEE subscribes to standard U.S. norms requiring that students exhibit the highest standards regarding academic honesty. Cheating and plagiarism in any course assignment or exam will not be tolerated and may result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the program. Standards of honesty and norms governing originality of work differ significantly from country to country. We expect students to adhere to both the U.S. American norms and the local norms, and in the case of conflict between the two, the more stringent of the two will prevail.

Three important principles are considered when defining and demanding academic honesty. These are related to *the fundamental tenet that one should not present the work of another person as one's own*.

The first principle is that *final examinations, quizzes and other tests must be done without assistance from another person, without looking at or otherwise consulting the work of another person, and without access to notes, books, or other pertinent information* (unless the professor has explicitly announced that a particular test is to be taken on an "open book" basis).

The second principle applies specifically to course work: *the same written paper may not be submitted in more than one course. Nor may a paper submitted at another educational institution be submitted to satisfy a paper requirement while studying abroad*.

The third principle is that *any use of the work of another person must be documented in any written papers, oral presentations, or other assignments carried out in connection with a course. This usually is done when quoting directly from another's work or including information told to you by another person* (the general rule in U.S. higher education is that if you have to look something up, or if you learned it recently either by reading or hearing something, you have to document it).



There are three levels of escalation establishing the seriousness of the plagiarism in question.

- **Level one plagiarism:** minor or unintentional plagiarism; leading to passable grade/failing grade on the assignment, depending on perspective of lecturer. No opportunity for resubmission.
- **Level two plagiarism:** significant plagiarism, but potentially due to poor referencing rather than intellectual property theft. This leads to a failing grade (potentially zero points) on the assignment. No opportunity for resubmission.
- **Level three plagiarism:** significant plagiarism, requiring investigation by the Center/Resident/Academic Director, and subsequent disciplinary panel.

Faculty will report any suspected circumstances of plagiarism to the Center/Resident/Academic Director immediately. Faculty can, if they deem it appropriate, require students to submit the Plagiarism Declaration Form (Appendix D) with each assignment as it is submitted.

In any case where Academic Honesty is in question while the student is still onsite at the program, and will impact the grade for the assignment in question, the CIEE Academic Honesty form (Appendix E) will be completed by the Center/Resident/Academic Director, signed by the professor, delivered to the student for signature and added to the student's permanent records. For any Level three violation, or repeated lower level violation, the Center/Resident/Academic Director will inform the student's home institution of the infraction and subsequent penalty.