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Fall 2018 office hours: Wednesday 3:30 – 5:30pm, Friday 12:00 - 2:00pm, and by appointment.
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CST7309/Fall 2018
New Materialisms: Nature, Culture, Environment
Wednesday 7:10 – 10:00pm, CU301

materialism (n.): The theory or belief that nothing exists except matter and its movements and modifications (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Course description:

Interest in matter—its entanglements in human and more-than-human ecologies—has lately increased amongst scholars in the Humanities eager to exercise a “more ecological sensibility” (Bennett). Feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz has proposed that we view nature “in terms of dynamic forces, fields of transformation and upheaval, rather than as a static fixity, passive, worked over, transformed and dynamized only by culture” (*Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, 2005). Part of a cluster of thinkers who constitute the New Materialist turn of the early twenty-first century, Grosz and others aim to unsettle the partitioning of human and nonhuman matter so central to modern intellectual practice.

The so-called Cartesian revolution of the early modern period, articulated in René Descartes’s 1641 *Meditations on First Philosophy*, is often credited with enabling new taxonomic categories—primary and secondary expressions of matter, subject and object, Human and Nature—that would make possible the exploitation of natural resources and the human communities imaginatively tethered to them. Less a formal species designation than a restrictive category denoting a small segment of the population, the “Human” as such is a vexed referent for a particular type—European, male—against which the category of the nonhuman is made possible. As a course in New Materialisms, such categories—human and nonhuman, animate and inanimate—will be our central preoccupation. We will read broadly and across disciplinary divides as we seek to understand the place of the no-longer-embodied human in the Anthropocene. We thus begin with a brief overview of our dystopian present, and the role of what Didier Debaise calls the “cosmology of the moderns,” before moving on to discussions about the agency, ontology, and nature of matter.

As this is a course not in “New Materialism” but “New Materialisms,” we will ultimately move beyond the initiating categories of the field to explore materialist critiques of energy and the networks of extraction and consumption that fuel “modern” culture. We will then close the semester with various dispatches from the “World of Matter” collective along with a few useful guides to “world-making” in the Anthropocene (Streeby). Course readings will include work by Stacy Alaimo, A.R. Ammons, Jane Bennett, William Connelly, Diana Coole, John Bellamy Foster, Samantha Frost, Donna Haraway, Eben Kirksey, Andreas Malm, Karl Marx, Jamaal May, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Muriel Rukeyser, and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing.

Required texts:

Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (ISBN-13: 978-0253222404)

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (ISBN: 978-0822346333)

William Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming* (ISBN: 978-0822363415)

Diana Coole & Samantha Frost, *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (ISBN: 978-0822347729)

John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature* (ISBN: 978-1583670125)

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (ISBN: 978-0822362241)

Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (ISBN: 978-0816689231)

Petrocultures Research Group, *After Oil* (ISBN: 978-0995042001)

Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (ISBN: 978-0822362333)

Shelley Streeby, *Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making through Science Fiction and Activism* (ISBN: 978-0520294455)

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (ISBN: 978-0691178325)

All readings appended with an asterisk () will be posted on our Canvas site.

Class requirements and Policies:

1. **Critical essays:** each student will prepare **two** brief (2-3 page) essays over the course of the term. Essays shall respond to a key text from our weekly readings and should contain: clear explanations of central concepts; close readings of key passages; and suggestions for new avenues for critical intervention—i.e., where these texts might also lead us. It is expected that the short essays will follow a logical research itinerary—that is, the shorter essays are designed to offer an opportunity to explore ideas and concepts with an eye toward the seminar paper.
2. **Book review:** students will compose a traditional book review of 1500-2500 words based upon one of the assigned texts. We will discuss genre conventions and submission procedures in class.
3. **Seminar leadership:** each student will be assigned a weekly discussion to lead. This will require a brief (3-5 minute) synopsis of central ideas; a selection of keywords to anchor class conversation; and a minimum of two questions for class discussion. **Students are encouraged to lead a discussion based upon the same text for which they prepared a critical essay.*
4. **Conference abstract** (250-500 words): each student will construct an abstract for a national or regional academic conference based upon their proposed seminar papers.
5. **Seminar paper** (20-25 pages): each student will produce a formal critique of selected works inclusive of appropriate secondary source material. We will discuss secondary source material, including our library's electronic resources as well as a host of digital archives focused on Environmental Humanities research, as we move through the semester. Primary and secondary source material must be reflective of the work of our class.

Grading policy:

Critical essays: 30%

Book review: 15%

Seminar leadership: 15%

Paper abstract: 5%

Conference presentation: 10%

Seminar paper: 25%

Grade Scale:

Florida Atlantic University follows a plus/minus (+/-) grading system. Numeric Values for this course are as follows: 93-100 A; 92-90 A-; 89-87 B+; 86-83 B; 82-80 B-; 79-77 C+; 76-73 C; 72-70 C-; 69-60 D; 59-0 F

FAU ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)—in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 203 (954-236-1222); or in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8585)—and follow all SAS procedures. For more information, see <http://www.fau.edu/sas/>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS) CENTER: Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see: http://wise.fau.edu/regulations/chapter4/Reg_4.001_5-26-10_FINAL.pdf

Course schedule (subject to change depending on class progress)

Part I: Anthropocene Matters

Week 1: 8/22

Terry Eagleton, "Materialisms" from *Materialism* (to be read prior to first class meeting)*

Didier Debaise, "The Cosmology of the Moderns" from *Nature as Event: The Lure of the Possible* (to be read prior to first class meeting)*

Raj Patel & Jason W. Moore, "Cheap Nature" from *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (to be read prior to first class meeting)*

Alexander G. Weheliye, "Blackness: The Human" from *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (to be read prior to first class meeting)*

A.R. Ammons, "Corsons Inlet"*

César Vallejo, "The Stones"*

Week 2: 8/29

Raymond Williams, "Nature" from *Keywords**

Karl Marx, brief selections from *Capital, Volume I* (selections TBA)*

John Bellamy Foster, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*

Week 3: 9/5

Andreas Malm, "Introduction: Theory for the Warming Condition" & "On the Building of Nature: Against Constructionism" from *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World**

William Connolly, *Facing the Planetary: Entangled Humanism and the Politics of Swarming*

Part II: New Materialisms

Week 4: 9/12

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

- "Introducing the New Materialisms" (Coole & Frost)
- "A Vitalist Stopover on the way to a New Materialism" (Jane Bennett)
- "Non-Dialectical Materialism" (Pheng Cheah)
- "Feminism, Materialism, and Freedom" (Elizabeth Grosz)
- "Fear and the Illusion of Autonomy" (Samantha Frost)
- "The Politics of 'Life Itself' and New Ways of Dying" (Rosi Braidotti)
- "Orientations Matter" (Sara Ahmed)

Week 5: 9/19

Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*

Eva Heyward, "Spider City Sex"*

Muriel Rukeyser, "Alloy"*

Week 6: 9/26

Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*
--from *Ecology without Nature**

Week 7: 10/3

Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*

Sylvia Wynter, from “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument”*

Alexander G. Weheliye, from *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human**

Part III: Vibrant Matter**Week 8: 10/10**

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*

A.R. Ammons, from *Garbage**

Week 9: 10/17

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*

Jamaal May, selections from *Hum**

Week 10: 10/24

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*

Eben Kirksey, from *Emergent Ecologies**

Eva Hayward, “Sensational Jellyfish: Aquarium Affects and the Matter of Immersion”*

Part IV: Energy**Week 11: 10/31**

Andreas Malm, “On Combined Development: Against Hybridism” & “On What Matter Does: Against New Materialism” from *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World**
---from *Fossil Capital**

Week 12: 11/7

Brent Ryan Bellamy & Jeff Diamanti, Eds. *Mediations*, “Special Issue: Materialism and the Critique of Energy” (Spring 2018)*

Part V: Radical Materialism**Week 13: 11/14**

Petrocultures Research Group, *After Oil*

The World of Matter, selected dispatches*

Week 14: 11/21 (NO CLASS)**Week 15: 11/28 (last class; 12/1 is last day of fall classes)**

Shelley Streeby, *Imagining the Future of Climate Change: World-Making through Science Fiction and Activism*

adrienne maree brown, “The River”*

***Wednesday 12/5 is a reading day; seminar papers will be due on Wednesday 12/12.**