



Imagining Climate Changed Futures (i.e. Making Cli-Fi) Project

Overview: Climate change is impacting every dimension of human and nonhuman existence on the planet—from ocean acidification to extreme weather events to impacts on food production, from arctic ice melt to rising sea levels, from changes in the insurance industry to the psychological and emotional impacts on individuals (especially young people) ... the list goes on and on. Moreover, these impacts, along with the choices that we (as humans, and specific communities of humans) continue to make will put us on different pathways into the future.

How do we, as environmental writers and artists imagine possible futures in the context of climate change? How do we create occasions for “shared imagination”? How do we communicate the complexity of such futures? These are difficult questions, and they require all the tools of literature, art, and the humanities in general. **In this assignment, you will work individually or in a group create a work of cli-fi (that is, a work of culture—broadly conceived—that imagines, or creates occasions for others to imagine, a possible future, or futures, as affected by climate change).** Your cli-fi must in some way be based in natural science or social science secondary research about climate change.

Part I, Creating Cli-Fi: In this part of the project you will **create a work of cli-fi**. I encourage you to be experimental, explorative, and speculative in how you consider undertaking this task. **Your original work of cli-fi could take many forms—it could be a podcast, a novel or short story collection, a game, a performance/work of drama, a film, a graphic novel, an interactive exhibit or website, etc.**

Scope/scale: If you choose to pursue a large project—for instance, an entire novel or graphic novel—that cannot be carried out because of time constraints, you should create a substantive and representative sample of that work and then supplement it with an explanation of the important elements of the rest of the work (for instance, if you wanted to write a novel, you could write a chapter and plot outline and a short synopsis of the rest of the novel).

Collaboration: **I encourage you to work with one or more of your classmates to collaboratively create a work of cli-fi!** There are many benefits to doing this, one of the most important being that creative collaboration is a crucial skill to develop for almost any career or discipline. **If you do choose to collaborate, the final product that you create should be significantly more robust because it will have more than one creator.** Moreover, each group member must write his/her own essay about the project as well as complete a group evaluation form.

Evaluation: Do not be overly concerned with your proficiency as a creative writer/narrative artist. For example, if you have a great idea for a graphic novel, but you do not know the first thing about drawing, that's fine. If you want to design a game, but never have before, give it a try. If you want to create a work that blends fictional writing and photography, but don't think you're "good" at either, it doesn't matter. I will not be evaluating your original work based on its technical or artistic proficiency with your chosen medium. Rather, I will be evaluating the vision with which you approach the project, the attempt you make in trying to carry it out, the thoughtfulness you put into the work, and the thoroughness of the research you conduct. For example, if you want to think about how you might write a series of short stories about future sea level rise in Florida, you'll need to do ample research about the social, ecological, political, economic effects of sea level rise in Florida and its connection to climate change.

Part II, Analysis essay:

In **at least full 3 pages** (Times New Roman 12-point font, 1" margins on all sides), you should write an essay that thoroughly and thoughtfully does the following (though not necessarily in this order or in specific sections):

- **Consider the connections between your cli-fi and other works of literature/culture/art:** What is your work's relationship to other works of cli-fi, and/or how is your work influenced by other examples of cli-fi that we have encountered in class? **You should explain in detail how your work draws from or responds to at least one other work of cli-fi (or other environmental literature/culture), and you should reference specific elements or moments from both your own work and the other works of cli-fi to support your answers.** Potential sub-questions you could address: What similarities and differences can you identify between your work and other examples from the cli-fi genre, and why do those similarities and differences matter? Does your work further develop, or take in a different direction, some of the thematic elements or stylistic features of these other works of climate change fiction? Does your work offer a corrective to an oversight or problem in other works of climate change fiction?
- **Analyze the content, style, and form/medium of your cli-fi:** What is important about your work in terms of its thematic elements (the content), and why did you make the choices you did regarding the style, form, and medium? Why did you choose this particular medium/form over other mediums/forms? What did this medium/form help you accomplish in your work of cli-fi? How does the medium/form of your work contribute to the meanings and effects of the work? **Perform a close reading of at least one representative passage or section of your cli-fi to explain some of these important thematic, stylistic, and formal elements** and explain why they are important in what you created. When appropriate, you should directly quote from your own work and provide analysis of those quotes.

- **Explain the role of research: Explain how your work of cli-fi specifically draws on scientific and other sources.** How did consulting these sources help you imagine and develop the story or style of your work? For example, if your work includes speculative elements, how did conducting research and consulting sources help you imagine the future in the context of climate change?
- **Evaluate the project: What is most successful about your work of cli-fi in the context of what you've learned this year about environmental literature and culture?** How did the project change over time, from your first conceptualization to the final product? What might be further changed in a future revision to better accomplish your goals? Looking at the project critically, do you see any oversights or assumptions that might need to be challenged or addressed?

Important note 1: You do not need to address every single specific question listed within each bullet point below, but rather should use these questions as a guide to writing the essay. Moreover, your essay should not itself be a list of bullet points responding to all of these questions.

Important note 2: Your essay should include a works cited list of any works that you cite/consult and parenthetical citations in MLA style for any quotes. The works cited list does not count toward the 3-page requirement.

Important note 3: You should complete your essay on your own. This part of the project is not collaborative.

Important note 4: The best essays will not only closely analyze your own cli-fi but will draw on what you've learned this year and will contextualize your work of cli-fi with specific ideas we've studied in class. For instance, ideas about: environmental justice, slow violence and environmental storytelling (Nixon), sense of place and bioregionalism (Lopez, Snyder), ecocentrism/anthropocentrism, climate art (McKibben), cli-fi (LeMenager), petro-culture/petro-modernity (Cariou), etc.