Making Sense of the Anthropocene  
INTD 350-01  
Fall 2016  
M 11:45 am - 3:25 pm  
Lone Mountain 345  

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Hours: Wed 1-4; or by appointment  

Course Description  
The Anthropocene describes the idea of a new geological epoch distinguished by the geological scale of human impacts on the Earth’s surface, atmosphere, oceans, and systems of nutrient cycling. Other organisms, like the cyanobacteria that oxygenated the atmosphere two billion years ago, have disrupted earth systems. But what does it mean, as Andy Revkin asks, to be “the first species that’s become a planet-scale influence and is aware of that reality?” How do we make sense of this? Does our status as a world-altering species evoke hubris or humility? And what does the shift from the predictable and habitable climate of the Holocene to the climate instability of the Anthropocene mean in terms of our future?  

So profound are the Anthropocene’s implications that the International Commission on Stratigraphy, the largest scientific organization within the International Union of Geological Sciences, has formed an ‘Anthropocene’ Working Group (AWG) tasked with developing a proposal to formalize the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch. The AWG will announce its recommendations later this year.  

Meanwhile, historians, philosophers, artists, social scientists and others are debating the ontological, phenomenological, existential and even theological questions that the idea of the Anthropocene triggers about our species, our planet, and our conjoined future. While academic debates around these questions are far from settled, at least one conclusion is clear: the concept of the Anthropocene is unsettling the stories we tell about our past, present and future. As artist Elizabeth Ellsworth has stated, “We humans do not yet know what it means to ‘live the Anthropocene.’ It is an unresolved, yet urgent, question.”  

In this course we will be searching at the intersection of art, activism and academics to find the places where new stories are emerging about who we are, how we might go about living the Anthropocene, and what this means for our future. Our journey towards “making sense of the anthropocene” will be both a collective and individual one.  

Collectively we will explore new stories and storytellers with an eye toward what they tell
us about the perspectives, skills, and practices that might be required for living in the Anthropocene. Individually, you will be making your own journey into the Anthropocene, a journey that will be documented through reflections on what the Anthropocene means to you, your creative or artistic expression of the journey, and a personal manifesto for how you intend to “live the Anthropocene.”

Our journey into the Anthropocene will be shaped by our interactions with a series of guest speakers known as Davies Fellows. Davies Fellows—cutting-edge thinkers, writers, activists and artists who are engaged in their own attempts at “making sense of the anthropocene”—will give a public talk or workshop and also engage with us during class time.

The seminar-style class will be student-centered, meaning class discussions will be led by students. Students will also collaborate in giving shape to how, individually and as a class, we want to make a statement or expression of what it means to live in the Anthropocene. Davies Fellows will guide us by sharing the creative processes through which they produce their own interpretations of the Anthropocene.

**Learning Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- discuss and engage critically with the ontological, phenomenological, existential and theological questions that the idea of the Anthropocene triggers about our species, our planet, and our conjoined future;
- express creatively a personal journey of making sense of the Anthropocene
- articulate a personal vision or philosophy for living in the Anthropocene

**Assessment of Learning Objectives**

**Critical Reflections** (25%)—One-page reflections on the week’s readings and interactions with Davies Forum guests. Due Sunday evenings by 9pm.

**Discussion Facilitation** (20%)—Each student will be assigned with a partner to facilitate discussion during two different class sessions. You will turn in a Plan of Facilitation by 9pm the day before your assigned class sessions. The Plan of Facilitation should include a synthesis/summary of the readings of the week and a series of questions, organized into themes or areas of focus, that you believe will allow the class discussion to delve deeply into the week’s assigned reading.

**Creative/Artistic Project** (20%)—To be decided.

**Personal Manifesto for “living the Anthropocene”** (20%)—You will articulate through writing, video, or other media how your interpretation of the Anthropocene gives shape
to the set of obligations, responsibilities, ambitions, hopes, strategies and practices you would like to embrace for living in the Anthropocene.

*Class Participation and Attendance* (15%)—As a Davies Scholar you are expected to arrive prepared by having completed the assigned reading for the week and submitted a critical reflection. If you do these two things, your participation in class discussions will be meaningful, thoughtful, and engaging. Attendance is expected and required. You will be permitted one unexcused absence over the course of the semester. Additional absences will result in the lowering of your participation grade.

**Grading**  
Each component of the course will be graded on a 100-point scale, weighted as indicated above.

- **A** = >93%
- **A-** = 90-92.9%
- **B+** = 87-89.9%
- **B** = 83-86.9%
- **B-** = 80-82.9%
- **C+** = 77-79.9%
- **C** = 73-76.9%
- **C-** = 70-72.9%

There will be no rounding in determining final grades and no extra credit offered.

**Required Readings**  
Most readings are available freely on the internet. Links in the schedule below will take you to them. Other readings will be available on Canvas. The following are the books that you will need to buy. They are not available in the USF bookstore but can easily be found new or used at a range of online bookstores. There are also inexpensive ebook options that you might want to consider.

*The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future*  
(Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, Columbia University Press, 2014)

*Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization*  
(Roy Scranton, City Lights, 2015)

*The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking Modernity in a New Epoch*  
(Clive Hamilton, Christophe Bonneuil, François Gemenne, eds., Routledge, 2015)  
[Available as eBook rental from **vitalsource.com**]
Course Schedule

**Week 1 (Aug 29)–Anthropocene: What’s that?**

**Required Readings:**
- “Human impact has pushed Earth into the Anthropocene, scientists say” (Adam Vaughan, The Guardian, Jan 7, 2016)
- “Did the Anthropocene Begin with a Bang or a Drumroll?” (Anthony D. Barnosky, Huffington Post, Jan 22, 2015)
- “Generation Anthropocene: How humans have altered the planet for ever” (Robert Macfarlane, The Guardian, April 1, 2016)

**Optional Additional Readings:**

**Optional Multimedia:**
- Welcome to the Anthropocene (3:28 video)
- The Anthropocene: Human Impact on the Environment (web interactive)
- 5 Ways Humans Have Changed the Earth (4:31 video)
- What is the Anthropocene? (3:14 video)
- In Search of the Anthropocene (BBC, 7:08 video)

**Sep 5–Labor Day (no class)**

**Week 2 (Sep 12)–Anthropocene: What’s at stake?**

**Required readings:**
- “The Inhuman Anthropocene,” (Dana Luciano, Avidly)
- “Rifts or Bridges? Ruptures and Continuities in Human-Environment Interactions” (Jessica Barnes in *Whose Anthropocene? Revisiting Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “Four Theses,”* Robert Emmett and Thomas Lekan, eds., RCC Perspectives, 2016/2)

**Week 3 (Sep 19)–Anthropocene: How names and stories reveal and conceal**

**Sep 19–Davies Fellow Public Event** (see full [program](#) for details)
“Navigating the Anthropocene: Art and Artist as Guides through a Challenging Epoch”
5:30-7pm, location TBA

**Required readings:**
- “Anthropocene: What’s in a Name?” (Ian Angus, Ecosocialist Notebook blog of Climate & Capitalism, an ecosocialist journal)
- “Against the Anthropocene” (Daniel Hartley, Salvage, Aug 31, 2015)
- “Scaling the Anthropocene: How the stories we tell matter” (Siri Veland and Amanda H. Lynch, *Geoforum*, Volume 72, June 2016, Pages 1–5)

**Davies Fellow class visit:**
[Aaron Czerny](#), artist

**Week 4 (Sep 26)–Anthropocene as stories from/about the future**

**Required readings:**
- *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future* (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway) [REQUIRED TEXT]
- Selections from *The World We Made* (Jonathon Porritt, Phaidon, 2013) [CANVAS]
- “Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet,” (Margaret Atwood, The Guardian)
- “Commission on Planetary Ages Decision CC87966424/49: The onomatopore of the Anthropocene” (Bronislaw Szerszynski, in *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking Modernity*)
in a New Epoch, Clive Hamilton, Christophe Bonneuil, François Gemenne, eds., Routledge, 2015) [CANVAS]


Sunday, Oct 2–Davies Fellow Public Event (see full program for details)
“Living in the Ruins: Strategies for Building Autonomy in the Anthropocene”
5-7pm, Berman Room, Fromm Hall, University of San Francisco

Week 5 (Oct 3)–Storytelling in/about the Anthropocene: Art and aesthetics

Required readings:


- “Visualizing the Anthropocene” (Nicholas Mirzoeff, Public Culture, 26[2]: 213-232, 2014) [CANVAS]

- “Imagining Geological Agency: Storytelling in the Anthropocene” (Alexa Weik von Mossner, in Whose Anthropocene? Revisiting Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “Four Theses,” Robert Emmett and Thomas Lekan, eds., RCC Perspectives, 2016/2) [PDF]

- “Art & Death: Lives Between the Fifth Assessment & the Sixth Extinction” (Heather Davis & Etienne Turpin, introduction to Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies, Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds., Open Humanities Press, 2015) [CANVAS]


- “Futures: Imagining Socioecological Transformation—An Introduction” (Bruce Braun, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 105:2 [20150, 239-243) [CANVAS]

Optional Multimedia:

- Imaging the Anthropocene (24:21 video)
Davies Fellow class visit:
Stephanie Wakefield, Glenn Dyer and Clark Fitzgerald, co-founders of Woodbine NYC, an experimental hub for developing the skills, practices, and tools for building autonomy in the Anthropocene

Sunday, Oct 9–Davies Fellow Public Event (see full program for details)
Amulets for the Anthropocene: Practices for Living in and as Change
1-4pm, Japanese Tea Garden, Golden Gate Park

Week 6 (Oct 10)–Museums as storytellers: Curating the Anthropocene

Required readings:
- “In the Planetarium: The Modern Museum on the Anthropocenic Stage” (Vincent Normand, in Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies, Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds., Open Humanities Press, 2015, pp. 63-78) [CANVAS]
- “Theorising More-Than Human Collectives for Climate Change Action in Museums” (Fiona R. Cameron, L'internationale, Politics of Life and Death, posted Nov 17, 2015)

Required Multimedia (online Anthropocene museum exhibitions):
- Placing the Golden Spike: Landscapes of the Anthropocene
- The Anthropocene Slam: A Cabinet of Curiosities
- Anthropocene Observatory
- Welcome to the Anthropocene
- The Natural History Museum
- What is the museum of the future? (various videos produced by the Natural History Museum)

Davies Fellow class visit:
Elizabeth Ellsworth and Jamie Kruse are artists and designers who pursue through their work “our most urgent and meaningful task as artists and humans: to invent and enact practices capable of acknowledging and living in responsive relationship to forces of change that make the world.” They are co-founders of smudge studio and of Friends of the Pleistocene, a blog dedicated to exploring sites and moments where the human and the geologic converge.

Oct 17–Fall Break (no class)
**Week 7 (Oct 24)–Old story plot devices: Agency and control, progress and liberation**

Required readings:
- “Human Agency in the Anthropocene” (Dipesh Chakrabarty, Perspectives on History)
- “The paradox of self-reference: sociological reflections on agency and intervention in the Anthropocene” (Florence Chiew) [CANVAS]

**Week 8 (Oct 31)–Old story protagonists and antagonists: Human/non-human, nature/culture, and other binaries**

**Oct 31–Davies Fellow Public Event** (see full program for details)
From the Dust of This World: The Dystopian Imaginary and the Anthropocene
11:45am-12:45pm, Lone Mountain 345

Required readings:
- “Love Your Monsters: Why we must care for our technologies as we do our children” (Bruno Latour); “The Anthropocene and Ozymandias” (Dave Foreman)
- “Rethinking Humanity in the Anthropocene: The Long View of Humans and Nature” (Kathleen R. Smythe, *Sustainability* 7(3): 146-153) [CANVAS]
- “Ordinary Futures: Interspecies Worldings in the Anthropocene” (Elizabeth DeLoughrey, in *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan, eds., Routledge) [CANVAS]
- “A feminist project of belonging for the Anthropocene” (J.K. Gibson-Graham, *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 18[1], 2011) [CANVAS]

Davies Fellow class visit:
Kristin Miller is an urban sociologist at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is a writer, photographer and documentary filmmaker interested in the ability of web-assisted storytelling to instantly create connections to new ideas, places, practices, and states of being.
**Week 9 (Nov 7)–Old story missing voices: Towards a postcolonial, queer, Black Anthropocene**

**Nov 7–Davies Fellow Public Event** (see full [program](#) for details)
The Bureau of Linguistical Reality: Creating Language for the Anthropocene through Public Participatory Artwork
5:30-7pm, location TBA

Required readings:
- “The Anthropocene and its Victims” (Francois Gemenne)
- “Beyond the Anthropocene’s common humanity” (Ninad Bondre and Sabine Wilke)
- “‘After the End Times’: African Futures and Speculative Fictions” (Matthew Omelsky)
- “European Colonialism and the Anthropocene: A view from the Pacific Coast of North America” (Kent G. Lightfoot et al.)
- “Indigenizing the Anthropocene” (Zoe Todd, in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, eds., Open Humanities Press, 2015, pp. 241-254) [CANVAS]
- “Painfully, from the first-person singular to first-person plural: the role of feminism in the study of the Anthropocene” (Daniel Kirjner) [CANVAS]
- “Must the Anthropocene be a Manthropocene?” (Kate Raworth)
- “Anthropocenic culturecide: an epitaph” (Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 17:6 [2016], 786-792) [CANVAS]

Davies Fellow class visit:
Alicia Escott and Heidi Quante are artists and co-founders of the Bureau of Linguistical Reality, a public participatory artwork focused on creating new language as an innovative way to better understand our rapidly changing world due to manmade climate change and other Anthropocenic events.

**Week 10 (Nov 14)–(Un)becoming human in the Anthropocene: Towards new stories of grief and hope**

**Nov 14–Davies Fellow Public Event** (see full [program](#) for details)
The Unmonumental and Indeterminate: The New Commons of the Anthropocene
5:30-7pm, location TBA

Required readings:

Davies Fellow class visit: Kris Timken and Cynthia Hooper are multimedia artists whose poetic visual and auditory narratives, informed by research into the landscapes and systems represented, aim to dissolve pre-Anthropocene divisions between humans and nature.

**Week 11 (Nov 21)–Grief**

Required readings:
- Environmental Trauma and Grief (Marie Eaton, Curriculum for the Bioregion) [.DOCX]
- “Reconstructing a future” (Clive Hamilton, Chapter 8 in *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth About Climate Change*, Earthscan, 2010) [CANVAS]
- “To Choose Life” (Joanna Macy and Molly Brown, in *Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work that Reconnects*, New Society, 2014) [PDF]

**Week 12 (Nov 28)–Anthropocene Creations/Curations: An Exhibition of Student Work**

**Week 13 (Dec 5)–Visions of the future: Science fiction and solarpunk**

Required readings:
- “An Interview with Margaret Atwood” (Ed Finn)
- “Can Science Fiction Help Us Dream Our Way out of Disaster?” (Claire L. Evans)
- “An Astrobiologist Asks a Sci-fi Novelist How to Survive the Anthropocene: Kim Stanley Robinson imagines our Future” (David Grinspoon);
- “The New Utopians” (Jeet Heer)
- “Flyfishing” (Dale Jamieson and Bonnie Nadzam, in *Love in the Anthropocene*, OR Books, 2015) [CANVAS]
- “Carbon” (Dale Jamieson and Bonnie Nadzam, in *Love in the Anthropocene*, OR Books, 2015) [CANVAS]
- “Solarpunk: Notes Toward a Manifesto” (Adam Flynn, Hieroglyph, Sept 4, 2014)
- Solarpunk, the LGBT Community, and the Importance of Imagining Positive Futures (Claudie Arseneault, Vitality, June 25, 2015)
- Why Solarpunk? (Sheryl Kaleo)

Optional readings and multimedia:
- Tumblr’s Solarpunk Network
- Solarpunk Press (short stories in the solarpunk genre)
Other Official Business

Academic Integrity
USF has an obligation to embody and foster the values of honesty and integrity. USF upholds the standards of honesty and integrity from all members of the academic community. All students are expected to know and adhere to the University's Honor Code. You can find the full text of the code online at myusf.usfca.edu/fogcutter

The policy covers:
- Plagiarism — intentionally or unintentionally representing the words or ideas of another person as your own; failure to properly cite references; manufacturing references.
- Working with another person when independent work is required.
- Submission of the same paper in more than one course without the specific permission of each instructor.
- Submitting a paper written by another person or obtained from the internet.

The penalties for violation of the policy may include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade in the course, and/or a referral to the Dean and the Committee on Student Academic Honesty. In addition, a letter will be sent to the Associate Dean for Student Academic Services; the letter will remain in your file for two years after you graduate, after which you may petition for its removal.

Students with Disabilities
The University of San Francisco is committed to providing equal access to students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability, or if you think you may have a disability, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 415 422-2613, to speak with a disability specialist (please note all communication with SDS is private and confidential). If you are eligible for accommodations, please request that your accommodation letter be sent to me as soon as possible (students are encouraged to contact SDS at the beginning of the semester), as accommodations are not retroactive. Once I have been notified by SDS of your accommodations we can discuss your accommodations and ensure your access to this class or clinical setting. For more information please visit the SDS website https://www.usfca.edu/student-disability-services