



## ARTH/ENV/PSCI 375 Green Art: The Aesthetics, Ethics, and Politics of Creativity in Today's World

### Course Syllabus Fall Semester 2024

**Instructor:** Jennifer Griffiths, PhD

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Prerequisites:** none

**Class Meeting Days & Time:** Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30-2pm

**Office Hours:** by appointment after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

**Course Type:** Standard Course

**Course Fee:** \$ 25.00

### Course Description

This class will examine the interrelationship between ecology, aesthetics, politics and ethics as they have been and are being reflected in historic, modern, and contemporary art (painting, sculpture, poetry, video, installation, mixed-media). It will take a global perspective on issues that are inevitably global in scope by looking at how artists from across cultures have been addressing environmental crises since the Industrial Revolution. We will focus on major themes such as the relationship between art and capitalism, art and material resources, environmental justice, and artist activism. We will discuss and explore these themes through both creative and analytic acts of writing and making.

### Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- *identify* major works of art that have spoken to ecological and environmental issues from 1800-Present (Weekly Quizzes)
- *summarize* complex relationships between political ethics and environmental aesthetics (Weekly Quizzes, Projects 1-3)
- *distinguish* the various kinds of responses that artists can take to impact environmental change and political crisis (Weekly Quizzes, Projects 1-3)
- *analyze* works of art across media (visual, literary, film, installation) as they relate to contemporary political, ethical, and environmental issues and crises (Projects 1-3)
- *integrate* multiple readings, media, and resources working with a partner to ideate an act of art activism (Final Project).

### Course Materials

#### Readings

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

#### Assessment

Attendance	10%
Quizzes/Participation	10%

Unit 1 Project	20%
Unit 2 Project	20%
Unit 3 Project	20%
Final Project	20%

### Grading

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute's default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

**Please note:** decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

### Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

#### *Attendance (10%)*

Attendance is an essential part of this course. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences per course without penalty, per Institute policy. If you attend all the other meetings, you will receive 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

#### *Quizzes and Participation (10%)*

Students will be assigned a quiz every week, which will be due before class time and will not be reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the highest grade they receive. Questions will address the images and ideas from class as well as the topics addressed in weekly readings and news articles.

#### *Project 1: Ekphrasis (20%)*

Students will write a paper which reflects on course material by identifying a work of visual art (not discussed in class and chosen from an approved list). They will write a detailed description of this work, an art historical practice called ekphrasis, which may include personal reflection, opinion, poetic license, and/or critical analysis. (circa 500 words).

#### *Project 2: Art in and on the Environment (20%)*

Students will reflect on course material about "art in and on the environment" to create their own piece of land, water, or wind art that must be accompanied by an artist statement explaining the meaning of the work (circa 300 words), documented in photographs and/or video to be explained in a class presentation. The work must be impermanent and use natural materials. Students will present their project in class explaining its motivations and inspirations.

### *Project 3 Detritus (20%)*

Students will reflect on course material and ideas about “garbage and recycled art” by creating a work of art (collage, sculpture, or mixed-media) out of recycled materials (plastics, cloth, glass) accompanied by a description of all the materials used in the piece. The industrial production process, origin, meaning, and environmental impact of every material must be discussed in your statement (circa 300 words). Students will set up their works in an in-class show and each student will present their work in class.

### *Project 4 Artivism Presentations (20%)*

Students will plan, envision, imagine, and (if possible, desirable, and legal) enact their own unique installation or demonstration of public protest art or artivism. Students must address a specific issue, identify a specific place, summarize the action, describe the needed circumstances and materials, and above all elaborate a specific intended goal of their intervention. Students will write a plan of action and manifesto (circa 500 words) and present their project (powerpoint, performance, documentation) in the class.

### **Extension & Submitting Late Work**

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

### Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first two absences per course due to illness will be considered excused “sick days” and do not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student’s academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student’s final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student’s responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness include death in the immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, and medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Absences relating to illness may be excused by the Director, but only if a medical certification is provided.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute’s Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

### Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an

unexcused absence or late penalty.

### Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person, or an AI generator, for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

### Laptop & Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices cannot be used during class lectures and discussions, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.

As an instructor and as a person, I am dependent on both my computer and my telephone. That said: An ever-increasing body of research shows that open laptops and telephones in the classroom create distraction (both visual and auditory) for those using them and those around them. You can type faster than you can write, and as a result you end up processing less when you're simply typing notes. For this reason, I have a physical notebook policy: I ask you to leave your computers in your bags and phones in your pockets and use a regular notebook. There are four exceptions: 1) if you have an accommodation; 2) if you're using a tablet to take notes, 3) if you make an office hours appointment with me to discuss the use of a computer; or 4) if we have an in-class tutorial about online research tools.

### U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

This course contributes to the achievement of one or more goals of U. N. Agenda for Sustainable Development



## Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

### WEEK 1 SEPT 10-12

#### **Week 1: Global industrial capitalism**

Meeting 1: The Industrial Revolution: Coal, steam engines, and cities

E.g. Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801) and John Mallord William Turner, *Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844); John Mallord William Turner, *The Slave Ship* (1840)

Meeting 2: Case Study: The Great Stink of 1858

Readings and resources for the week:

\*Linda Weintraub, “Introduction” and “Eco Art Themes” in *To Life!: Eco Art in Pursuit of a Sustainable Planet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 19-31.

John Ruskin, excerpt from *Modern Painters*, 1843

Documentary Film: *The Genius of Turner: Painting the Industrial Revolution*, directed by Clare Beavan (2006)

### WEEK 2 SEPT 17-19

#### **Week 2: The birth of conspicuous consumption**

Meeting 1: The Great Exhibition of 1851

Meeting 2: Case study: William Morris and the arsenic industry

Readings and resources for the week:

\*David Graeber and David Wengrow, “Wicked Liberty: The indigenous critique and the myth of progress” *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (2021)

Alison Meier, “Death By Wallpaper,” Book Review in *Hyperallergenic* (October 31, 2016)

Documentary Film: *Hidden Killers of the Victorian Home*, written and hosted by Suzannah Lipscomb (2013)

### WEEK 3 SEPT 24-26

#### **Week 3: The Romantic imagination strikes back**

Meeting 1: Nature and the Sublime: Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea Fog* (1818); Caspar David Friedrich, *The Abbey in the Oakwood* (1808-10); John Constable, *Stratford Mill* (1820); Jacob van Ruisdael’s *The Windmill of Wijk bij Duurstede* (c. 1670)

Meeting 2: Case Study: Ansel Adams and the National Parks

Readings and resources for the week:

Documentary Film: Written and hosted by Peter Ackroyd, *The Romantics: Nature* (2006)

Documentary Film: Ansel Adams, directed by Ric Burns, Produced for American Experience by the Sierra Club (2002).

## **PROJECT 1 EKPHRASIS DUE OCTOBER 1**

### **WEEK 4 OCT 1-3**

#### **Week 4: Ecology, Environmentalism, and Land Art Part 1**

Meeting 1: Peru's *Nazca lines*, 500 BCE-500 CE; *Stonehenge* circa 2500 BCE; Moss garden of Saihō-ji, Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* (1970), David Nash, *Ash Dome* (1977)

Meeting 2: Case Study: Andy Goldsworthy

#### Readings and resources for the week:

\*Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962) excerpt pp. 1-16.

Howard Halle, "The ArtNews Guide to Land Art" (March 2023)

Documentary Film: James Fox, *Forest, Field and Sky: Art out of Nature* (2016)

Documentary Film: Andy Goldsworthy, documentary film *Rivers and Tides* (2001)

### **WEEK 5 OCT 8-10**

#### **Week 5: Ecofeminisms**

Meeting 1: Betsy Damon, 7000 Year Old Woman (1977), Barbara Kruger, *We Won't Play Our Nature to Your Culture* (1983), Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield* (1982)

Meeting 2: Case Study: Ana Mendieta

#### Readings and resources for the week:

\*Carolyn Merchant, excerpt from *The Death of Nature* (1980), pp. 269-278.

Jacqueline Millner, "Ecofeminism in Contemporary Art: An Australian Perspective," *Aware* (May 12, 2023)

Hatty Nestor, "Tracing Mendieta, Mendieta's Trace: The Silueta Series 1973-1980" (June 14, 2021)

Meeting 3 (Friday, October 11): Field Trip to Fuseum, Perugia

## **PROJECT 2 "ART IN AND ON THE ENVIRONMENT" DUE OCTOBER 17**

### **WEEK 6 OCT 15-17**

#### **MIDTERM WEEK**

## **Week 6: Garbage and Recycled Art**

Meeting 1: Readymades and recycled art from Marcel Duchamp, *The Fountain* (1917) to Arte Povera to Romuald Hazoumè, mask series (1980)

Meeting 2: **Project 2 “Art in and on the Environment” Student Presentations**

Readings for the week:

\*Andrea Lerda, “Nature’s Creative Balance: On Italian Eco-art,” *Italy and the Environmental Humanities: Landscapes, Natures, Ecologies* (University of Virginia Press, 2018) pp. 225-234.

Manuel Toledo, “Venice Biennale honors Africa’s ‘bottle-top artist’ El Anatsui” *BBC News* (9 May 2015)

Amuche Nnabueze, “El Anatsui creates gigantic artworks from recycled materials - why the world fell in love with him,” *The Conversation* (April 13, 2023)

### **Semester Break** **OCT 21-27**

**WEEK 7 OCT 29-31**

## **Week 7: Water Purity and Pollution**

Meeting 1: Hokusai, *Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji* (1830-32); Olafur Eliasson, *Ice Watch Series* (2014-2018)

Meeting 2: Community Case Study: Flint Water Crisis

Readings for the week:

Christine Guth, “Hokusai’s Great Waves in Nineteenth-Century Japanese Visual Culture,” *The Art Bulletin* 93, No. 4 (December 2011), pp. 468-485.

LaToya Ruby Frazier, TED Talk (Nov 20, 2019)

Documentary Film: Written and Directed by Abby Ellis, *Flint’s Deadly Water*, Frontline (2019)

**WEEK 8 NOV 5-7**

## **Week 8: Biodiversity in and as Art**

Meeting 1: John James Audubon and Anna Maria Sibylla Merian

Meeting 2:

Readings for the week:

\*Emma Steinkraus, “The Protofeminist Insects of Giovanna Garzoni and Maria Sibylla Merian,” *Art Herstory* (August 9, 2019)

\*Damian Carrington, “What is Biodiversity and Why does it Matter to Us?” *The Guardian* (March 12, 2018)

Tom Seymour, “More than 500 museums launch art project to confront mass biodiversity loss across UK,” *The Art Newspaper* (January 24, 2023)

Documentary Film: Directed by Ulrike Ottinger, *Taiga* (1992)

TED Talk Winona LaDuke, “Seeds of Our Ancestors, Seeds of Life” (2012)

### **PROJECT 3 “Detritus” DUE NOVEMBER 12**

**WEEK 9 NOV 12-14**

#### **Week 9: Activism and Artivism: Climate**

##### **Meeting 1: Project 3 student exhibition and presentations on Detritus**

Meeting 2: Are Museums Neutral? Case Studies: Liberate Tate Art Collective, *Dead in the water* (2010) and *Human Cost* (2011), Just Stop Oil Protests

##### **Readings for the week:**

Bill McKibben, “What the Warming World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art,” *Grist* (April 22, 2005)

Giovanni Aloi, “After 38 attacks on art, climate protesters have fallen into big oil’s trap it’s time to change tack,” *The Guardian* (February 6, 2024)

Naomi Larsson, “Oil stains a cultural institution in Britain, but artists are fighting back” (2019)

Vanderklippe, “Capturing the Truth” (2019)

**WEEK 10 NOV 19-21**

#### **Week 10: Activism and Artivism: Environmental Justice**

##### **Meeting 1: Who owns the land, water, and trees?**

Meeting 2: Ramón Piaguaaje, *Eternal Amazon*, 2000; Diana Dean, *Clayoquat Morning of the Demonstration* (2010)

##### **Readings for the week:**

\*J. Timmons Roberts, “Globalizing Environmental Justice” in *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement*, edited by Ronald Sandler and Phaedra Pezzullo (Boston: MIT Press, 2007), pp. 285-308.

Steph Kwetásel’wet Wood, “How Clayoquat Sound’s War in the Woods Transformed a Region” (August 28, 2021)

Ai Wei Wei, “Reclaiming Art from Capitalism,” *The Economist* (November 8, 2021)



Documentary Film: Directed by Magnus Isacson, *Uranium*, National Film Board of Canada (1990)

Film: The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, Written and directed by Chiwetel Ejiofor, Produced by Netflix, 2019

**WEEK 11 NOV 26**

**Week 11: Dystopian Futures?**

Meeting 1: Afro- and Indigenous Perspectives on Futures and Futurisms  
Wangechi Mutu, *The End of Carrying All* (2015); Cannupa Hanska Luger. *Future Ancestral Technologies* (2018-onCoomasaru and Theresa Deichert,going), *Attrition* (2024)

Meeting 2: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

Readings for the week:

\*Edwin Introduction: “Art in Apocalyptic Times” in *Imagining the Apocalypse: Art and the End Times* (London: Courtauld Online Books, 2022)

**WEEK 12 DEC 3-5**

**Final Projects and Presentations**

Meeting 1: Documentary Film: David Attenborough, A Life on Our Planet (Netflix 2020)

Meeting 2: **Project 4 Artivism Student Presentations Due**

**WEEK 13 DEC 10**

**Final Class, Exams, & Special Academic Events Week**

**Project 4 Artivism Student Presentations Due**