

An aerial photograph of a coastal area, likely a marsh or delta region. A prominent river or canal runs vertically through the center, with a small boat visible in it. The surrounding land is a mix of dark, dense vegetation and lighter, possibly flooded or muddy areas. Numerous small, rectangular structures, possibly houses or sheds, are scattered across the landscape, particularly on the right side. The overall scene suggests a rural or semi-rural coastal environment.

ENGL 4000 | CRN 30326 | Online | Summer 2023

Special Topics in Literature: Anthropocene Literatures

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Course Description

Catalog description: Studies of literary works with a particular focus. The topics announced at each scheduling of the course. May be repeated once when the topic varies. May be offered concurrently with ENGL 6000.

Welcome to the Anthropocene! Literally meaning “The Age of Humans,” this is the proposed name for our current geological epoch, which began when human activities started to have a noticeable impact on Earth’s geology and ecosystems. The term has been around for a while now (Paul Crutzen popularized it in a famous 2000 essay, which we’ll read), and it has spread from geology and the atmospheric science to arts and the humanities as a way to understand our world and the momentous changes we’re living through—climatic, cultural, artistic, biological. So, this class is an introduction to the Anthropocene concept through literature, with a particular focus on cli-fi (climate fiction). How do we make sense of our emotions and experiences in a quickly changing world? Art, music, literature, film—of course!

Course Objectives

- (1) understand and analyze the Anthropocene concept
- (2) read and analyze works of climate fiction
- (3) practice analysis of cultural texts and objects
- (4) think critically and creatively about your place in the world

Required Texts

Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140* (Orbit, ISBN 9780316262316)
Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood* (Anchor, ISBN 9780307739902)
Dale Jamison and Bonnie Nadzam, *Love in the Anthropocene* (OR Books, ISBN 9781939293909)

Course Website

<https://anthropocenelit.weebly.com/>

Course Requirements

Course prerequisites: C or better in ENGL 1010/1020; junior standing

Expectations and Tips for Success

- You will do a lot of reading for this class—this is an English class, after all! You should keep up with the readings and assignments each week, and you should submit everything on time. However, if something is not working for you, please let me know—I'm flexible and will consider changing my approach if you are struggling.
- Make sure you have a strong and reliable Internet connection. This is an online course, so it's vital that you have consistent access to the Internet.
- Check your AUM email at least once each day.
- Spend at least one hour each day on course readings and assignments.
- Take notes on every reading and lecture.
- Organize your time so that you can complete the work throughout the week rather than trying to cram everything in on one day.
- Begin working on major assignments well in advance of the deadline.
- Make some time to meet with me via Zoom to talk about the readings, assignments, and class on a one-to-one basis (this is what my office hours are for; if you can't make my office hours, we can schedule a time to meet that works for you).
- Ask questions early and often—lots and lots of questions!

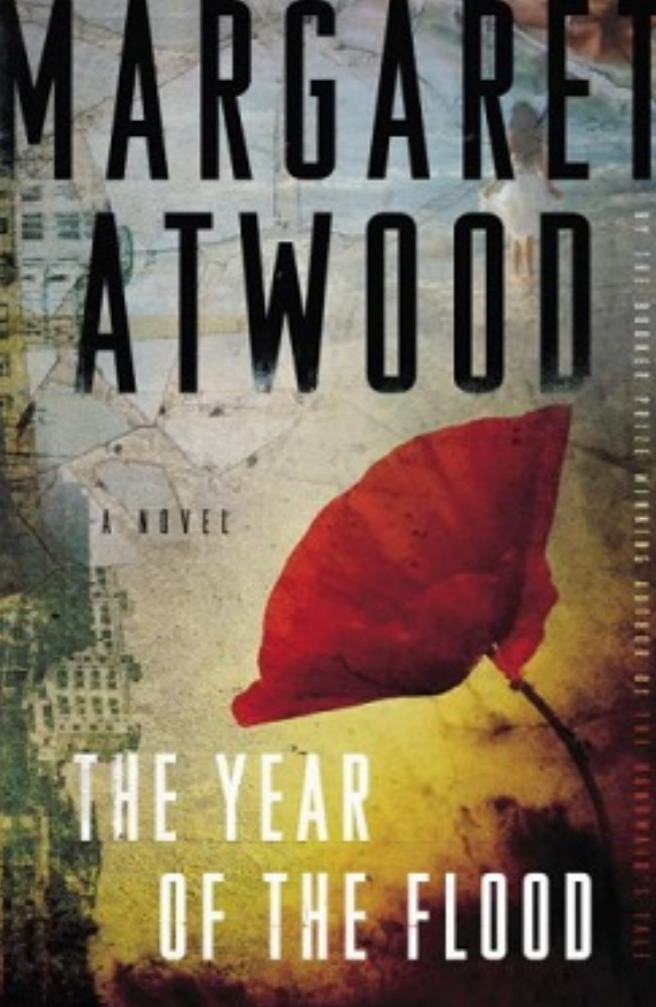
Email Etiquette

I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend.

When you email me (and any other professor):

- Use your AUM email address
- Add a subject line so I know what you're writing about and so I can keep track of our email conversation
- Address me as Professor Reno or Dr. Reno (pronouns he/him/his)
- Sign off your email with your full name
- In general, follow professional email etiquette and structure—if you're not sure what this means, Google it for some examples
- NOTE: I may not respond to your email if you don't follow etiquette, especially if there's no subject line, no salutation, and no name. This is one of the few things that irks me: I interpret an email with no salutation, subject, and/or sign off as rude, unprofessional, and offensive (whether you intend it or not!).





Assignments

Note: You will receive individual assignment sheets and grading rubrics for most of these assignments.

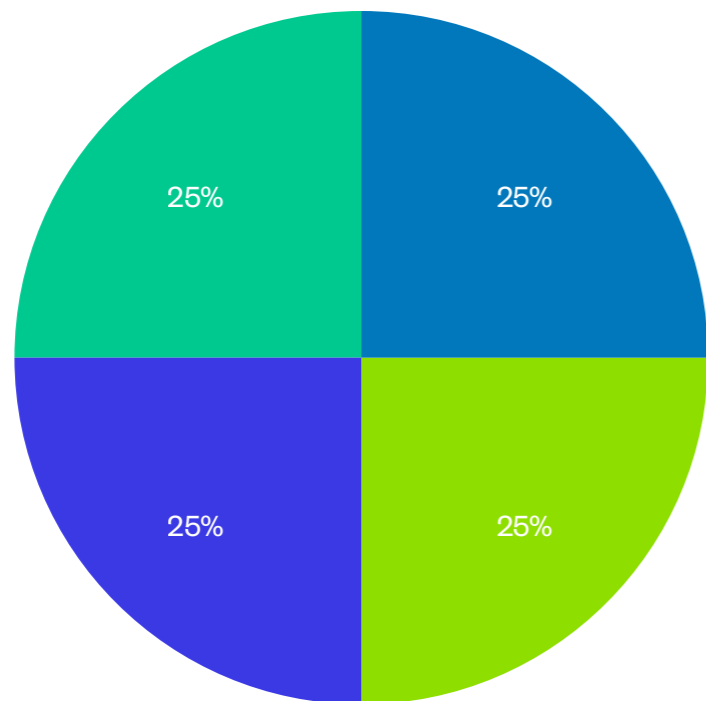
Weekly Discussion Board (25%): Each week, you will write 1-2 posts on our Blackboard discussion board. I'll post prompts/questions for each week. These posts will be both academic and personal in nature—they are informal and are meant to replicate, in a modest way, how a discussion might work if this were an in-person class. One goal is to get you to interact with other students in the class and to hear others' viewpoints (other than mine!).

Poetry Project (25%): You will find a poem that you consider to be an "Anthropocene poem" (whatever that is! up to you to make the case). Then, you'll write a close reading essay of around 750 words where you both analyze the poem in detail and explain how your reading shows this to be an Anthropocene poem. This will be a close reading paper, so you'll need to engage directly with the text, offering your analysis and interpretation of the literary work. We'll post these poems and papers on Blackboard for everyone to check out and read for themselves.

Anthropocene Analysis (25%): You will search out a cultural text or object that represents/comments on/is an example of the Anthropocene in some way (that some way is up to you to determine). The cultural text could be a song, or artwork, or TV show, or clothing, or experience—just not a literary work! Or you might choose an object—a tree in the AUM woods, a penny you find on the sidewalk, a gas station near your home. You'll write a 750-word paper analyzing that text/object.

Creative Project (25%): The creative project can be anything you want inspired by our study of the Anthropocene. I'm totally open to your interests and ideas. Your project might be a story or poem or play you write; a podcast or short film; a song or musical composition; a work of visual/digital art; or anything else you'd care to create. I am open to you taking the project in any direction that you'd like. This project will focus on creativity, imagination, and adaptation in the Anthropocene. We'll share our projects during the last week of the semester as a celebration of our work—and I'll make one, too!

- Discussion Board
- Poetry Project
- Anthropocene Analysis
- Creative Project



Course Policies

Assignment Deadlines and Make-up Policy

All assignments are due when they are due. But I'm not a monster: if something comes up and you need an extension, please talk to me in advance of the due date. If you have a job or other commitments that make the deadlines difficult, we can discuss alternative submission dates on a case-by-case basis. But for the most part, plan to turn in assignments when they are due.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. All writing for this class must be your own and must be written exclusively for this class. Any use of quotation, paraphrases, or ideas from outside sources, including Internet sources, must be properly documented. You may not reuse or recycle papers you've written for other classes. You may not copy a sentence or paragraph from a paper someone else wrote. In cases where you have clearly plagiarized, or committed some other act of academic dishonesty, you will automatically fail the assignment. In other words: **don't cheat**. If you are confused or struggling with an assignment, talk to me about it. If you are unsure of whether you've quoted a source properly, talk to me about it. If you put off writing a paper until the night before it's due and you're feeling stressed out and tempted to copy something online, talk to me about it. **A big note here:** plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the assignment.

Grading

For any assignment, and for the course overall, I consider A-work as exceptional. Such work goes above and beyond the requirements. B-work is good, quality work. Such work pushes beyond the requirements. C-work satisfies the minimum requirements of the assignment/course. C is an average grade; most work falls near this range. D or F means you submitted nothing or completely disregarded this syllabus and the assignment prompts. For major assignments, please see the prompts and rubrics. I will ask you to grade some of your own assignments as a way to reflect on your writing skills (but no guarantee I will agree with your grade!).

A = 90-100	B+ = 87-89	B = 80-86	C+ = 77-79
C = 70-76	D+ = 67-69	D = 60-66	F = 59 or lower

I also want to stress: **learning is more important than grades**. Discovering something new about the world or about yourself is more important than a grade. Becoming a better reader and writer is more important than a grade. Becoming a

more informed citizen of the world is more important than a grade. So, think about what you put into the class—what you put into your education—because that is what really matters. You may get an A in a class, and then forget everything about that class within a month. You may get a C in a class, but what you learned changes your life forever. In the end, grades don't matter that much.

You may talk to me at any point in the semester about your standing in the class. There is usually a curve up for final grades, depending on the overall class average once all assignments are complete.

Academic Support

All students have the opportunity to receive free academic support at AUM. Visit the Learning Center in the WASC on the second floor of the Library or the Instructional Support Lab in 203 Goodwyn Hall. They offer writing consulting as well as tutoring in almost every class through graduate school. You can reach the Learning Center at 334-244-3470 and the Support Lab at 334-244-3265.

IT Support

Students may seek technology assistance from the ITS Help Desk located in the computer lab on the second floor of the Taylor Center. You may also call 334-244-3500 or email helpdesk@aum.edu.

Accommodations

Students who need accommodations should contact me by email to discuss specifics. If you have not registered for accommodation services through the Center for Disability Services but need accommodations, please give them a call at 334-244-3631 or email cds@aum.edu.

Evaluations

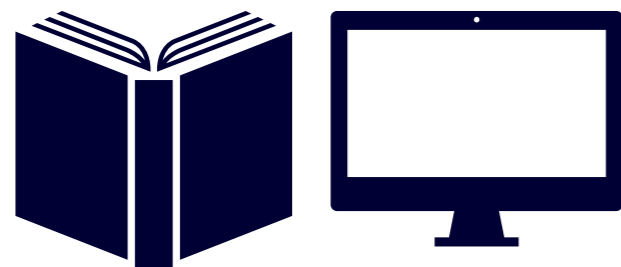
You will receive a link through your AUM email to complete a voluntary, anonymous course evaluation during the last few weeks of the semester.

Important Dates

The last day to add classes is June 11. The registration cancellation date is June 11. The last day to drop is July 16.

Suggested Weekly Timeline

This sample timeline is meant to give you a suggested structure to complete the readings and assignments successfully each week. **All assignments are due before you come to class each week.** But you won't be able to cram in the entire week's worth of reading and writing in one day. So, you must manage your time to ensure that you can meet the weekly deadlines. As a general guideline, **you should spend at least 9 hrs/week on work for this class.**



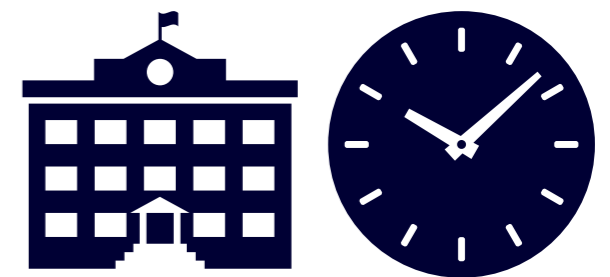
Monday: Class Preparation and Reading

Think of Monday as the day to prepare for the coming week. You should consult the syllabus and course materials to see what's due in the coming week, make a plan for completing the readings and assignments, and begin on the readings. Take lots of notes as you read and begin on the week's assignments.



Tues–Weds: Readings, Lectures, and Assignments

Ideally, you'll make a MW or TR schedule to work on this class, just like a f2f class. Since this is a summer course, that's about 3 hours/day, 2 days/week, in addition to the time it takes you to read and complete assignments. You'll need to complete the readings before watching the lectures. Take lots of notes as you watch the lectures, write down questions for me, and have the readings handy so that you can follow along.



Thurs–Fri: Complete and Submit Assignments

Assignments are due no later than 11:59pm on Saturday, but I recommend you aim to complete your work by Friday. It's important to take some time away from work, and the weekend is traditionally the time to relax, so try to get your work done and submitted no later than Friday, if you can (or, even better, Thursday! And I say that because you know AUM doesn't have Friday classes—but that doesn't matter for an online class).

Daily Schedule

AS THIS IS AN ONLINE COURSE, WE DON'T HAVE A MEETING DAY/TIME, BUT I'VE ORGANIZED THE DAILY SCHEDULE BASED ON SATURDAY DEADLINES. YOU MUST COMPLETE AND SUBMIT ALL ASSIGNMENTS BY 11:59PM SATURDAY EACH WEEK. THIS SCHEDULE AND SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

Week One: June 3: Introduction to the Course

Watch: all introductory videos

Read/watch: <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/climate-change-evidence-causes/basics-of-climate-change/>

Read: Paul Crutzen, two short essays on the Anthropocene (PDFs)

Read: Jeremy Davies, selection from *The Birth of the Anthropocene* (PDF)

Week Two: June 10: Love in the Anthropocene

Watch: week 2 lectures

Read: Dale Jamieson and Bonnie Nadzam, *Love in the Anthropocene*

Week Three: June 17: New York 2140

Watch: week 3 lectures

Read: Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140*, Parts 1-4

Week Four: June 24: New York 2140, cont.

Watch: week 4 lectures

Read: Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140*, Parts 5-8

Week Five: July 1: Poetry Project

Read: All your fellow classmates' poems and papers

Week Six: July 8: The Year of the Flood

Watch: week 6 lectures

Read: Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, Chapters 1-7

Week Seven: July 15: The Year of the Flood, cont.

Watch: week 7 lectures

Read: Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*, Chapters 8-14

Week Eight: July 22: Anthropocene Analysis

DUE: ANTHROPOCENE ANALYSIS

Read: All your fellow classmates' analysis papers

Finals Week: July 27 (this is a Thursday)

DUE: CREATIVE PROJECT

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General University Policies

Attendance Reporting Policy

An attendance verification is in place for students accepting federal grants and loans. Absences from class may affect a student's eligibility for these funds. Students who have not participated in any session by the report due date are reported as no shows and their financial aid may be reduced or cancelled as a result. For purposes of financial aid and enrollment, a student will be considered to be in attendance in an online class when he student has met one of the following conditions: (1) submits an academic assignment, exam, or quiz on time; (2) participated in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction; (3) posts by the student show participation in an online study group that is assigned by the institution; (4) posts by the student in a discussion forum show the student's participation in an online discussion about academic matters; or (5) emails initiated by the student to a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subjects related to the course materials on Blackboard.

Withdrawal

A student who wishes to withdraw from the course or has missed too many classes must complete the standard process for dropping a class by the withdrawal date for the term (Sunday, July 16, 2021).

Disability Accommodations

Students who need accommodations are asked to contact me by email to discuss your accommodations. If you have not registered for accommodation services through the Center for Disability Services (CDS), but need accommodations, make an appointment with CDS, 147 Taylor Center, or call 334-244-3631, or email CDS at cds@aum.edu

Free Academic Support

All students have the opportunity to receive free academic support at AUM. Visit the Learning Center (LC) in the WASC on second floor Library or the Instructional Support Lab (ISL) in 203 Goodwyn Hall. The LC/ISL offers writing consulting as well as tutoring in almost every class through graduate school. The LC may be reached at 334-244-3470 (call or walk-in for a session), and the ISL may be reached at 344-244-3265. ISL tutoring is first-come, first-served. Current operating hours can be found at <https://www.aum.edu/academics/academic-support/warhawk-academic-success-center/learning-center-isl/>.

Academic Honesty

The Student Academic Honesty Code applied to all student taking Auburn University at Montgomery classes, By act of registration, all students agree to conform to this Code. The regulations are designed to support the interests of AUM and its students and faculty, in maintaining the honesty and integrity essential to and inherent in an academic institutions. Full policy, including potential penalties for violation, can be found in the Student Handbook beginning on page 65. Full text at: <https://www.aum.edu/aum-student-handbook/>.

Technology Assistance

Students may seek technology assistance from the ITS Help Desk, located in the computer lab on the second floor of the Taylor Center. You may also call 334-244-3500 or email helpdesk@aum.edu.

Curtiss Course Critiques

AUM is committed to effective teaching, Students assist in maintaining and enhancing this effectiveness by completing teaching evaluations in a thoughtful and honest manner. We ask that you take time to respond to all questions and write comments. I can use your feedback to know what is working in the course and what is not working and improve the learning experience. The instructor will not be given student comments nor informed of the aggregate results of evaluations until after final grades have been submitted. All individual student responses will be confidential. The evaluations will be available on the following schedule for our class: evaluations open on July 12 and close on July 26. See <https://www.aum.edu/curtiss-course-critiques/>.

Key Dates for Full Term Fall Classes

Last Day to Add Classes	June 11
Last Day for 100% Refund	June 11
Last Day for 50% Refund	June 25
Holiday	June 19
Mid-Semester Grades Due	July 6
Holiday	July 3-4
Last Day to Drop	July 16
Classes End	July 27