

Approaches to Climate Change in Environmental Humanities

PhD Course, University of Bergen, August 30–September 4, 2020

5 ECTS credits

Language: English

The course will be held digitally if the corona situation does not allow physical presence in Bergen.

Can the humanities contribute productively to the inter-disciplinary field of climate change research? Some of the humanistic contributions to this field have focused on how climate change has been and is being conceptualized, narrated and visually represented. Another crucial contribution has been on how climate change and the related idea of the Anthropocene affect notions of time and historicity, while a third, growing field in the humanities has focused the imaginaries of climate change futures, and questions about how climate change is visualized and exhibited across media.

During the five-day course, we will discuss climate change from several perspectives within environmental humanities. Narrative and linguistic approaches will be one main focus. Narratives and concepts are heuristic tools which help make sense of reality, of the environment, of the past, the present, and future. But narratives can also create path dependencies and lock-ins, privileging some trajectories, while blocking, or simply effacing others. As such, narratives and concepts play an important role in structuring how people reason and talk about climate change, and in guiding decision making and action – or non-action.

Another main focus will be on temporality and long-term perspectives, including discussions on historicity and futurity as well as historical and archaeological studies. Recent debates on climate change temporality have been concerned with how climate change and the Anthropocene establish new conditions for understanding history, and it has been claimed that the long-term temporal dimension of climate change challenges traditional understandings of history by going beyond the timespan of human history. In this course we will discuss how multiple temporalities are entwined in various discourses on climate change.

The measuring and calculation of global climate change depends on advanced computing and huge amounts of global scale data. Thus, a major challenge in communicating the severity of climate change to a larger audience is that it is not directly observable. How is it possible to visualize and exhibit such a phenomenon? Exhibitions on topics related to climate change have opened at several major Scandinavian museums, such as The University Museum of Bergen, Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, Natural History Museum in Oslo and The Nordic Museum in Stockholm. The course will discuss the challenges concerning exhibiting climate change.

The course will include lectures, text seminars and workshops, in which the participants' research materials are discussed. Methods used will be close reading of texts, including field notes, qualitative interviews, media texts, survey discourse and visual representations.

The course will be organized in the following thematic sections:

- Climate, language and narrativity
- Climate change temporality
- History, archaeology and climate change
- Exhibiting climate change
- Perspectives on climate change, science and politics

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Organizers:

Kjersti Fløttum, Kyrre Kverndokk and Rasmus Slaatelid

Confirmed lecturers:

University of Bergen: Marit Ruge Bjærke (Cultural Studies), Scott Bremer (Centre for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities), Kjersti Fløttum (French linguistics) Øyvind Gjerstad (French Linguistics), Ramona Harrison (Archaeology), Kyrre Kverndokk (Cultural Studies) and Eivind Seland (History). Other universities: Julia Nordblad (History of ideas, Uppsala University), Bergsveinn Thorsson (Museology, University of Oslo), Lotten Gustafsson Reinius (Ethnology, Stockholm University), John Ødemark (Cultural history, University of Oslo).

Application process: PhD candidates from *any* country and *any* discipline are welcome to apply. Advanced MA students may be considered in exceptional cases. Admission guidelines are as follows.

Application deadline: May 15, 2020.

1) NoRS-EH members: The course is offered as part of the Norwegian Researcher School in Environmental Humanities (NoRS-EH), and priority will be given to members. Students based at a Norwegian university in any discipline working on any PhD project related to environmental humanities are encouraged to join the researcher school. NoRS-EH members will be fully funded for travel and accommodation for this course. If you are eligible to join and are not yet a member of NoRS-EH, please complete the process detailed on the school's main page: <https://www.uis.no/forskning-og-ph-d/ph-d-utdanning/forskerskolen-nors-eh/>. Persons who are based in Norway but are not NoRS-EH members will be treated the same as applicants outside of Norway (#2 below).

2) Non-NoRS-EH members, including applicants based outside Norway: PhD students based in any country who are not members of NoRS-EH are also encouraged to apply for this course. Any places not filled by NoRS-EH members will be offered to students from outside the school. There is no course fee, but students outside NoRS-EH must cover their own travel and accommodation expenses.

To apply for this course, submit your application as a **single PDF file** to kyrre.kverndokk@ahkr.uib.no. It should consist of 1) a 1-page description of your research project and explanation of your motivation for participating in the course, and 2) a 1-page CV.