



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

Course Syllabus Spring Semester 2024

Instructor: Jennifer Griffiths, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30pm-2:00pm

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: Art and Capitalism (20%)

Students will write a paper which reflects on course material and ideas about the unit 1 theme "art and capitalism" by identifying a work of visual, literary, musical, video, or installation art (not discussed in class) and examining this work through personal reflection, opinion, ekphrastic description, and critical analysis. How does

this artist address the interrelationships between money, art, and power? How effective was/is this work of art?

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

Students will reflect on course material and ideas about the unit 2 theme “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 about the meaning of the work, documented in photographs or video, and circulated. The work must be impermanent.

Project 3 Detritus, Destruction, Displacement (20%)

Students will reflect on course material and ideas about the unit 3 theme “detritus, destruction, displacement” 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 (origin, meaning, and environmental impact).

Project 4 Artivism Presentation (20%)

Students will work in pairs to plan, envision, imagine, and (if possible, desirable, and legal) enact their own unique installation or demonstration of public protest art or activism. The team must address a specific issue, summarize the action, describe the materials, and elaborate the intended goal of the intervention, turning in a written plan of action and manifesto. They will also present a powerpoint documentation (real or imagined) to 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. All students are allowed 2 unexcused absences, which do not need to be justified. It is the student’s responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity. i.e., sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class. More than 2 absences will affect your final grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences (8 or more) 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 includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, 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.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1 JAN 23-25

Unit 1: Art and Capitalism

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.

Ai Weiwei, "Reclaiming art from capitalism," *The Economist* (November 8, 2021)

Art and Capitalism: Who Owns the Mountains?

Meeting 1 The Industrial Revolution

Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801) and JMW Turner, *Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844)

Meeting 2: Case Studies: William Morris and Ansel Adams

Readings and materials for the week:

Nathan Vanderklippe, "Capturing the Truth," *Globe and Mail* (May 3, 2019)

Alison Meier, "Death By Wallpaper," Book Review in *Hyperallergic* (October 31, 2016)

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

WEEK 2 JAN 30-FEB 1

Art and Capitalism: Who Owns the Land and Trees?

Meeting 1: The Sublime: Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer above the Sea Fog* (1818) and William Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, 1798

Meeting 2: Case Study: War in the Woods 1990s

Readings and materials for the week:

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

David Tindall, "Twenty years after the protest, what we learned from Clayoquot Sound" *Globe and Mail* (August 12, 2013)

Steph Kwetásel'wet Wood, "How Clayoquot Sound's War in the Woods transformed a region" *The Narvaht* (August 28, 2021)

WEEK 3 FEB 6-8

Art and Capitalism: Who Owns the Water?

Meeting 1: John Mallord William Turner, *The Slave Ship* (1840); John Constable, *Stratford Mill* (1820); Ernest Zacharevic, *Splash and Burn Project* (2016-Ongoing)

Meeting 2: Case Study: Flint Water Crisis

Readings for the week:

John Ruskin, excerpt from *Modern Painters*, 1843

Kate Lamb, "Where there's a wall there's a way: artists take aim at Sumatra's palm oil industry" *The Guardian* (May 15, 2017)

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

WEEK 4 FEB 13-15

Art and Capitalism: Who Owns the Wind and Air?

Meeting 1: Wind power: Jacob van Ruisdael's *The Windmill of Wijk bij Duurstede* (c. 1670)

Meeting 2: The dream of flight and the nightmare of aviation: Benedetta, *Synthesis of Communication Murals* (1933-4)

Readings and materials for the week:

Yuriko Saito, "Machines in the Ocean: The Aesthetics of Wind Farms," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 2 (2004)

Hannah Ritchie (2020) - "Climate change and flying: what share of global CO2 emissions come from aviation?" Published online at OurWorldInData.org.

Case Study: Thaiwiji Puengkasemsomboon "Taking a Stand for Clean Air," Warin Labs Contemporary, Art for Air exhibitions, Thailand

Project 1 due

WEEK 5 FEB 20-22

Unit 2 Art in and on the Environment Land Art

Meeting 1. Origins: Peru's *Nazca lines*, 500 BCE-500 CE and other ancient sites

Meeting 2: Modern movement: Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* (1970), David Nash, *Ash Dome* (1977), Ana Mendieta, *Siluetas* series

Readings for the week:

Robert Morris, "Aligned with Nazca" *Art Forum* (October 1975)

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

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

Friday, February 23: Field Trip to Fuseum, Perugia

WEEK 6 FEB 27-29

Unit 2 Art in and on the Environment

Water Art

Meeting 1: Clash of worldviews: *Thirty-Six View of Mount Fuji* (1830-32) and *The Great Wave*

Meeting 2: Case study: Olafur Eliasson, *Ice Watch Series* (2014-2018)

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.

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

Semester Break

WEEK 7 MAR 12-14

Unit 2 Art in and on the Environment

Wind Art

Meeting 1: William Kamkwamba between art, invention, and necessity

Meeting 2: Elena Paroucheva and Theo Jansen

Readings for the week:

María Fernanda Torres, "Elena Paroucheva's Energy Sculptures Bring Art and Industry Together" (2021)

Ian Frazier, "The March of the Strandbeests: Theo Jansen's wind-powered sculpture" *The New Yorker* (August 29, 2011)

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

Project 2 due

WEEK 8 MAR 19-21

Unit 3 Detritus, Destruction, Displacement

Ready-Mades, Waste, and Recycling

Meeting 1: Avant-garde readymades by Marcel Duchamp, *The Fountain* (1917) and Pablo Picasso, *Bull's Head* (1942)

Meeting 2: Romuald Hazoumè, mask series (1980) and El Anatsui at the Venice Biennale

Readings for the week:

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

Manuel Toledo, "Venice Biennale honors Africa's 'bottle-top artist' El Anatsui" *BBC News* (9 May 2015)

Marisa Gertz, "Thirteen Artists Who Turned Ocean Trash Into Amazing Art" *Time* (June 8, 2016)

Documentary Film: Washed Ashore and Artula Institute

WEEK 9 MAR 26-28

**Unit 3 Detritus, Destruction, Displacement
Climate Change**

Meeting 1: The role of the museum: case study on Liberate Tate Art Collective, *Dead in the water* (2010) and *Human Cost* (2011)

Meeting 2: The role of the museum: case study on Just Stop Oil Protests

Readings for the week:

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

Grindon, "Art, Activism and Climate Change: The Crisis in Copenhagen," *Art Monthly* 333 (February 2010), pp. 9-12.

Video Lecture: Elizabeth Rauh, *A Hot Wind Blows: Contemporary Ecocritical Art in the Middle East*, 20 October 2020.

WEEK 10 APR 2-4

**Unit 3 Detritus, Destruction, Displacement
Environmental Justice**

Meeting 1: Trans-atlantic slave trade

Romuald Hazoum , *La Bouche du Roi* (1997-2005) and Yinka Shonibare, *Wind Sculptures* (2013)

Meeting 2: Off the land: indigenous worldviews

Ram n Piaguaje, *Eternal Amazon*, 2000

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.

Resource: Art for Climate Justice

TED Talk: Ashlee Cunsolo Wilcox

Documentary Film: *Lament for the Land* (2003)

WEEK 11 APR 9-11

Unit 3 Detritus, Destruction, Displacement

Utopian or Dystopian Futures

Meeting 1: Afro- and Indigenous Futurisms

Wangechi Mutu, *The End of Carrying All* (2015)

Meeting 2: Case study: Cannupa Hanska Luger. *Future Ancestral Technologies* (2018-ongoing)

Readings for the week:

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

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)

‘Resource: Eco-futurism In Afrofuturism: A Fresh Environmental Perspective

Project 3 due

WEEK 12 APR 16-18

Final Projects and Presentations

Meeting 1: **Artivism Presentations**

Meeting 2: **Artivism Presentations**

WEEK 13 APR 23-25

Final Exams and Special Academic Events Week

TBA