

## Expos 20 : What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Climate Change?

### Course Description:

This class will explore how to write, think, and talk about the complexities of global climate change. We are living in a moment where the reality of massive, human-made global climate change has become unavoidable. In the face of our changing plane--the loss of ordinary seasons, bugs, expected weather, known landmarks--language can seem hard to find. While [fires burn in California](#) and [coastlines disappear](#), artists, politicians, business owners, and citizens seem to still be casting about for a way to comprehend and talk about the changes that are already taking place, and the ones that are coming. How can we write about a world in flux? How do the effects of environmental disaster change in relation to class, or race, or gender, or location? How do we create narratives about environmental loss? In unit one, we will investigate how different experts describe the current effects of the climate crisis. We will read the [newest IPCC report on the climate crisis](#) and use it to analyze a series of green or [eco advertisements](#) considering this scientific and international understanding of the crisis. In the second unit, we will turn to competing stories about the origins of the climate crisis. Some scientists and historians claim that the Anthropocene, a name for this geological era of human-made change, begins with the start of agriculture or the beginning of the nuclear age; others place the beginning in the rise of the plantation system in the Americas. Reading poetry by Tommy Pico, fiction by Karen Tai Yamashita, and watching the film [Daughters of the Dust](#), alongside selections from the scientific journal *Nature* and excerpts from work by ecofeminist Donna Haraway, we will compare how each starting point tells a different story about the cause, and the continuing effects, of climate change. In unit three, we will turn to the future, asking why so many of our climate crisis narratives imagine the end of the world and asking what it means to imagine the future in the moment of crisis. Final research papers will evaluate visions of the future, with such examples as seed-saving projects, Octavia Butler's novel *The Parable of the Sower*, the student-lead climate change movement "Fridays for the Future," and the Green New Deal.

In Expos 20 we will be focusing on writing. This is a class built around the elements of the academic essay: you will be learning how to build an argument, analyze primary and secondary sources, supporting your argument with detailed evidence, and writing engaging and thoughtful essays. The focus of this class is the practice of writing, and our primary concern will be learning how to write clearly and well. The climate crisis is a crisis, as many have said, of storytelling and knowledge: what stories do we tell about the origins, and current effects, of the rising global temperatures? The answers to these questions shape perception, action and policy (for example: for years journalists and scientists have stated that we could not attribute extreme weather to climate change, in the past years, [this has dramatically changed](#)). As we read, analyze, and question government reports, newspaper articles, poems, films, and stories, we will be asking not only what stories about the climate are present in these sources, but also what arguments, and stories, we are building and writing ourselves.