

ENST 303 - Radical Hope in the Age of the Anthropocene

Course Syllabus – Fall 2023

Instructor: Deb Sinha, Visiting Assistant Professor	
Office: Kaufman 182	Office Hours: Wednesdays 12 noon-1:30 PM, and by appointment
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Course Description As we live through times with rapidly worsening social and ecological conditions, it is difficult to feel a sense of hope in the future of our species and the planet. While there are numerous proposed plans and solutions, we seem to be failing to meet the growing world crisis at social, political, economic and environmental levels. During these times of overwhelming ecological crises, it is important not to be soothed by narratives of “techno-optimism” or “greening” of “business as usual” resolving our current crisis. The purpose of this course is to help us understand how to rediscover hope by identifying our current existential blind spots, reject the notion that we cannot change the ways things are at present, and embrace the idea that positive collective change is essential to thrive in the age of the Anthropocene. “To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing” - Raymond Williams.

Course Objectives The course shares the common objectives to develop an advanced understanding of environmental studies, environmental change and human-environment interactions, and to develop an advanced ability to address environmental issues through problem identification, evaluation of literature relevant to the field, obtainment of new knowledge and effective communication. Additionally this course aims to develop an advanced understanding of the socio-economic-historical context of climate change to set the stage for thinking about thriving in the Anthropocene future. At the end of the course students should have a broad understanding of the conditions and mechanisms that have created the current impasse regarding preventing and remediating climate change, and the limitations of technological fixes. Students should also have clarity about essential changes necessary in the realm of social, political and economic systems if we want a hopeful future.

Course Schedule

Lecture & Discussions: MR, 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

Start Date (First class): August 28

Classroom: Kaufman 179

End Date (Final Day of Class): December 7

Prerequisites There are no specific course prerequisites required for this class.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical condition– that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Executive Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/ADS, email access@dickinson.edu, call (717)245-1734, or go to the ADS office in Room 005 of Old West, Lower Level (aka "the OWLL").

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please follow the guidance at www.dickinson.edu/AccessPlan for disclosing the accommodations for which you are eligible and scheduling a meeting with me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your accommodations and finalize your Access Plan. If you will be using any test-taking accommodations in this class, be sure to enter all test dates into your Access Plan in advance of our meeting. ADS will be happy to provide any assistance you may need.

Physical Access to Our Classroom and my Office This class meets at Kaufman Hall which has two accessible entrances – one from the W Louther St side and the other from the Cherry St side. Since Kaufman is a single-story building, there are no elevator necessary to access the classroom. My office is also located in Kaufman Hall and is accessible without the need of an elevator.

SOAR: Academic Success Support and More Students can find a wealth of strategic academic success tools (like weekly planners, semester calendars, and much more) by going online to www.dickinson.edu/SOAR or to Old West's Lower Level (aka "the OWLL"). SOAR stands for **S**trategies, **O**rganization, & **A**chievement **R**esources, and there you'll find apps, tips, and other resources related to organization, study skills, memory strategies, note-taking, test-taking, and more. You'll find strategies for managing your time and well-being, as well as information about academic success workshops offered throughout the semester. If you'd like to attend a workshop or request one-on-one assistance with developing a strategy for a manageable and academically successful semester, email SOAR@dickinson.edu.

Religious Conflicts Please let me know if the observance of a religious holiday conflicts with a class meeting. Such absences will not be penalized, but I must be informed of these anticipated absences **during the first week of the semester**. You are responsible for making arrangements to obtain all material presented during your absence.

Flexibility and Feedback If it becomes evident during the semester that certain aspects of the course need improvement, those aspects will be changed after consultation with you and without compromising learning goals. To achieve this, your willingness to provide timely feedback throughout the semester is requested. When changes are necessary, they will be made.

Redistribution of Classroom Material Students will be provided with lecture notes during the semester. These materials may be used only for personal study and not be redistributed to any third party. All course materials are the instructors' or the author's intellectual property and may not be redistributed, reused, sold, or disseminated without express written permission.

Note about Course Content The course materials contain some works that address and/or contain strong language. If you are concerned that specific material is likely to be challenging for you, I would be happy to discuss any concerns you may have. Likewise, if you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to course, I welcome such discussions as an appropriate part of our classwork.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Attendance and Participation Attending class and participating in lecture discussions are essential components of any course. You are responsible for attending all lectures, participating in discussions, understanding the readings, and completing all assignments.

Our course depends on collective work, and so attendance and participation at every class is required. Just as comments by the professor and your faculty advisor will facilitate your intellectual growth, so too will the comments and insights that come from your peers. Through these interactions you will also earn part of the course grade. I expect you to enter each class on time and prepared to discuss readings or work assigned for that day. Speaking is one way you can show participation; you can also show participation by attentiveness and visible involvement in discussions. Texting, emailing, doing other work, etc., will reduce your participation grade for a class meeting.

Missing a class means you may not have all the instructions or information needed to finish an assignment. As a general rule, students who miss any lectures must make other arrangements to obtain class-related notes, handouts, and announcements from their classmates. As a student in this course, **you are responsible for all material presented during lecture, even if you are not in class that day.** Because our class time together is so important, there are usually limits on the number of absences you can have. If you start accumulating absences without notifying me and don't respond to emails, I will become concerned about you and alert the [CARE team](#). **If you miss more than two weeks of class, cumulatively, without approved excuses, you will receive a failing grade for the course.** I hope the semester goes smoothly for all of us, but if you have any problems, let me know. You will have my complete support to help you succeed in the course, and I will direct you toward college resources as needed.

Communication The course website maintained on Dickinson's Moodle Learning Management System is the primary source of course activities and scheduling information. This website will also serve as the official repository for all presentation material, lab assignments, reading material, and grades. Additional details for the course may also be communicated to the students via email as needed. All email messages will be sent only to the student's Dickinson email account. Similarly, students are asked to use only their college email address when emailing the instructor. **Students must regularly check the course Moodle website and their Dickinson College email for any updated communication about the course.**

Academic Honesty Dickinson students are expected to uphold the educational values associated with our learning community, as explained in the Academic Conduct section of the [Dickinson College Community Standards](#). The course aims to develop and strengthen your capacity to read and react to texts using a critical framework. The use of AI may stifle your own independent thinking and creativity, and would be counter to the purpose of this course. Material generated by these programs may also be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. AI tools reproduce, rather than challenge, errors in the sources. Accordingly, all work you do must be entirely your own and should not involve the use of any AI tools. Any use of AI, cheating, plagiarism, or dishonesty may result in disciplinary action, per Dickinson Standards.

Respectful Engagement Discussion is essential to any class; everyone should feel comfortable participating. Thoughtful debates are highly encouraged, and we must always be respectful. Everyone comes here with different experiences, knowledge, beliefs, and expectations; please respect that

diversity by engaging their ideas without personal criticism. To maintain this classroom as a safe space, I require that you do not share anything from the course that could identify any of the participants of this course, including but not limited to audio and video recordings.

Collaboration All work in this course is individual. Refer to the student handbook for information on academic integrity and plagiarism. All suspected violations of the College's academic standards will be reported for formal judicial review.

Due Dates and Late Penalties Given the various deadlines of the course, there is not much tolerance for late work. Late work will be penalized one letter grade per day, as determined by the timestamp on the Moodle drop boxes, up to a maximum of ten (10) days. Assignments over ten (10) days late will not be accepted and will be marked as incomplete with a grade of zero (0) percent.

Grades

The grading system used for this course will be a modified academic scale, not based on a curve, as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Performance
A	93.00 – 100%	Excellent
A-	90.00 – 92.99	
B+	87.00 – 89.99	Good
B	83.00 – 86.99	
B-	80.00 – 82.99	
C+	77.00 – 79.99	Satisfactory
C	73.00 – 76.99	
C-	70.00 – 72.99	
D+	67.00 – 69.99	Passing, but less than satisfactory
D	63.00 – 66.99	
D-	60.00 – 62.99	
F	Less than 60%	Failing

Course grades will be computed based upon the following percentage breakdown:

Assignments	Grade
▪ Participation (includes attendance)	10%
▪ Journal Entries (25 @ 2% each)	50%
▪ Solarpunk Fiction Book Review	10%
▪ Journal Articles Review	10%
▪ Term Paper	20%

All assignments and grades will be administered through the course Moodle website; however, you should **always keep a copy of your submitted assignments it for your records until after the course has been completed and you receive a final grade**. This is particularly helpful should there be a problem with or a question on any of your file submittals, or a need to verify the grade for any of your assignments.

There are no extra-credit assignments for this course.

Assignments

Since all assignments associated with this course involves writing in an academic style, students are encouraged to seek out help of Dickinson's [Norman M. Eberly Multilingual Writing Center](#) located inside the Waidner-Boyd Lee Spahr Library (main level), if necessary. Trained undergraduate peer tutors would help you build a functional writing process tailored to the writing task, recognize areas for improvement in your drafts, implement the skills, techniques, and dispositions needed to move the writing process forward, and help develop a sense of confidence in yourselves as writers. You can set up an appointment with tutors using this [webpage](#).

Journal Entries Out of the possible 26 weeks for which you have been assigned reading materials, you will submit 25 journal entries throughout the semester by **midnight on Sundays** (for the Monday class) and **midnight on Wednesdays** (for the Thursday class). The entries would be about the topics we are covering, in which you convey your thinking about the readings and topics, and how you see them connecting within and among readings and in possible broader connections across weeks as the semester progresses.

There is no set word count for these entries, but I would expect a minimum of 200 words for each week's entry. I will comment on these entries in terms of their content and to further our dialogue about your work, rather than commenting on style or editorial matters. I will mark these entries with 2-1-0 scale, where 2 points represents a substantive effort, 1 point represents a minimal effort (such as not addressing the required readings), and 0 points for no submission or something off topic.

Solarpunk Fiction Book Review You will submit one book review based on a fiction belonging to the Solarpunk subgenre of science fiction. You will select a book of your choice (you can find a list of books [here](#)) and write a review based on the contents of the book and the course materials that we have read in the class. Detailed guidelines for the book review would be provided at a later date.

Journal Articles Review Coming soon

Term Paper Coming soon

Course Materials

Most required readings for the course are either available online through the Dickinson Waidner-Spahr Library website, on reserve at the library or available through the course Moodle webpage.

Books

- Angus, Ian (2016). [*Facing the Anthropocene: Fossil Capitalism and the Crisis of the Earth System*](#). Monthly Review Press. (henceforth **FTA**)
- Bonneuil, C., & Fressoz, J.-B. (2016). *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*. Verso. (henceforth **TSOTA**)
- Chayka, Kyle (2020). [*The Longing for Less: Living with Minimalism*](#). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Ghosh, Amitav (2016). *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Kallis, Giorgos (2017). [*In Defense of Degrowth: Opinions and Manifestos*](#). (henceforth **IDOD**)
- Kelsey, Elin (2020). [*Hope Matters: Why Changing the Way We Think is Critical to Solving the Environmental Crisis*](#). Greystone Books. (henceforth **HM**)
- Klein, N. (2014). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (Simon & Schuster). Simon & Schuster. (henceforth **TCE**) *
- Krenak, Ailton (2020). *Ideas to Postpone the End of the World*. House of Anansi Press.
- Krenak, Ailton (2023). *Life is Not Useful*. Polity Press.
- Lafargue, Paul (1883). [*The Right to Be Lazy*](#). Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company.
- Macy, Joanna, and Chris Johnstone (2012). *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in Without Going Crazy*. New World Library. (henceforth **AH**)
- Odell, Jenny (2019). *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*. Melville House.

* Two copies on course reserve at the Waidner-Spahr Library

Articles (Journals, News Media)

- Chakraborty, D. (2009). The Climate of History: Four Theses. *Critical Inquiry*, 35(2), 197–222.
- Flood, H. (n.d.). *Vibe Shift*. Adbusters. <https://www.adbusters.org/article/vibe-shift>
- Ghai, R. (2023, July 31). *There are so many problems with the Anthropocene definition: Amitav Ghosh*. Down to Earth. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/interviews/climate-change/there-are-so-many-problems-with-the-anthropocene-definition-amitav-ghosh-90928>
- Nicholas, T., Hall, G., & Schmidt, C. (2020, July 14). *The faulty science, doomism, and flawed conclusions of "Deep Adaptation."* openDemocracy. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/faulty-science-doomism-and-flawed-conclusions-deep-adaptation/>
- Osaka, S. (2023, March 24). Why climate 'doomers' are replacing climate 'deniers.' *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/03/24/climate-doomers-ipcc-un-report/>
- Princen, T. (2014). A Letter to a (Composite) Student in Environmental Studies. In [*Beyond Doom and Gloom: An Exploration through Letters*](#) (pp. 15–17). Rachel Carson Center Perspectives.

- Renkl, M. (2023, May 15). Graduates, my generation wrecked so much that's precious. How can I offer you advice? *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/15/opinion/letter-to-graduates-hopedespair.html>
- Roos, J. (2023, April 18). We Don't Know What Will Happen Next. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/18/opinion/global-crisis-future.html>
- Solnit, R. (2023, July 26). We can't afford to be climate doomers. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jul/26/we-cant-afford-to-be-climate-doomers>
- Wiedmann, T., Lenzen, M., Keyßer, L., & Steinberger, J. (2020). Scientists' warning on affluence. *Nature Communications*, 11(3107).
- Zhong, R. (2023, July 11). The Human Age Has a New Symbol. It's a Record of Bomb Tests and Fossil Fuels. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/11/climate/anthropocene-epochcrawford-lake.html>

Media

- [99% : the Occupy Wall Street collaborative film \(2013\)](#) (documentary)
- [Adbusters](#) (magazine)
- [Climate, Hope & Science: The Science of Happiness \(2023\)](#) (podcast)
- [Communicating Hope in an Age of Despair - Elin Kelsey \(2016\)](#) (video)
- [Honeyland \(2019\)](#) (documentary)
- [How to Manage Climate Anxiety - Tara Brach \(2022\)](#) (video)
- [Planet of the Humans \(2019\)](#) (documentary)
- [This Changes Everything \(2018\)](#) (documentary)

Week	Date	Readings	Class Visits/Talks
1	Aug 28	Course Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How Can I Offer you Advice? NYT (printout, Moodle) A Letter to a (Composite) Student in Environmental Studies (printout, Moodle) 	
	Aug 31	Welcome to the Anthropocene? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 1) Anthropocene, Down to Earth (on Moodle) FTA (Appendix) Anthropocene, NYT (on Moodle) 	Claire Burnet, '24, ENST Major
2	Sept 4	Oh, the Humanity! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 2) Climate of History (on Moodle) 	
	Sept 7	Spaceship Earth & The Helpless Anthropos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 3 & 4) FTA (Chap 7) 	
	Sept 7	Talk: The Case for Rage: Why Anger Is Essential to Anti-Racist Struggle (Optional)	
3	Sept 11	Thermocene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 5) FTA (Chap 8) 	
	Sept 14	No class	Malinda Clatterbuck, Franklin & Marshall College
	Sept 17	Action: March to End Fossil Fuels, NYC (Optional)	
4	Sept 18	Thanatocene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 6) FTA (Chap 9) 	
	Sept 21	Phagocene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 7) FTA (Chap 10) Affluence, Weidmann et al. (on Moodle) 	
5	Sept 25	Phronocene & Agnotocene TSOTA (Chap 8 & 9)	
	Sept 28	Capitalocene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 10) FTA (Chap 11) 	Brenda Landis, Deputy Mayor, Carlisle Borough
6	Oct 2	Polemocene <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TSOTA (Chap 11) The Great Derangement (Part II, on Moodle) 	
	Oct 4	Talk - Tara Houska, 7:00 pm, Anita Tuvin Schlechter Auditorium (REQUIRED)	
	Oct 5	Magical Thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCE (Part Two) 	

7	Oct 9	OK Doomer! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TSOTA (Conclusion) ▪ Doomers, WaPo (on Moodle) ▪ Deep Adaptation, OpenDemocracy (on Moodle) ▪ Doomers, Guardian (on Moodle) 	
	Oct 12	Reboot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to Do Nothing (Chap 1 & 3, on Moodle) Recap – Semester So Far	
8	Oct 16	No class – Mid-Term Pause	
	Oct 19	Vibe Shift <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Longing for Less (Chap 1) ▪ Vibe Shift, Adbusters (on Moodle) 	
9	Oct 23	Less is More <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Right to be Lazy ▪ IDOD (Chap 15 & 16, on Moodle) 	Tiffany Ayres & Lindsey Lyons, SayBees Apiary & The Hive Cooperative
	Oct 26	The Great Turning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AH (Introduction & Part One: Chap 1-4) 	
10	Oct 30	Seeing with New Eyes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AH (Part Two: Chap 5-8) 	
	Nov 2	Going Forth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AH (Part Three: Chap 9-13) 	
11	Nov 6	The Alternative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FTA (Part Three: Chap 12-13) 	Alex Smith, Dickinson Farm, ENST Alum
	Nov 8	Talk: Uncertainty in Climate Change Research: An Integrated Approach (REQUIRED)	
	Nov 9	Degrowth as an Alternative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IDOD (Part I: Chap 1-4, on Moodle) 	
12	Nov 13	Degrowth Conversations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IDOD (Part VI: Chap 21-24, on Moodle) 	
	Nov 16	Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ We Don't Know, NYT (on Moodle) ▪ TCE (Chap 9 & 10) 	
13	Nov 20	Indigenous Voices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TCE (Chap 11) ▪ Ideas to Postpone the End of the World (on Moodle) ▪ Life is Not Useful (on Moodle) 	
	Nov 23	No class – Thanksgiving Break	
14	Nov 27	Paying Our Debts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ TCE (Chap 12 - Conclusion) 	Phoebe Galione, ALLARM, ENST Alum
	Nov 30	Stories Change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ HM (Introduction – Chap 4) 	

15	Dec 4	Trending Hopeful ▪ HM (Chap 5 - Afterword)	
	Dec 7	Course Wrap-Up	