

gender, justice, and the environment

Yale University, Spring 2015

WGSS 365/ EVST 358

Tuesdays 2:30-4:20pm, LC 103

Professor Vanessa Agard-Jones (vanessa.agard-jones@yale.edu)

Office hours by appointment: <http://agardjones.youcanbook.me>

course description

What do the massive global crises that humans have wrought in “the age of the Anthropocene” (extinction, pollution, natural resource depletion, and climate change—among others) have to do with bodily-bound ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality?

How have academics and activists understood the relationship between gendered beings (both human and non-human) and the environments in which they live?

What can feminist thinking contribute to visions for environmental justice, at both local and planetary scales?

Building from these essential questions, this course offers a framework for thinking about the intersections between feminist theory and environmental justice. Through readings, discussions, film screenings, and conversations with guest speakers, we will ask questions about the relationships among humans, non-human animals, and the material world in the construction of ideas about the environment and its futures. The main themes to be considered include: feminist theories of nature and materiality, bodies and environmental toxicities, how we might think about interspecies connections, and the sociopolitical contexts of environmental disasters. We approach these questions from the vantage of several different disciplinary traditions, including anthropology, history, science studies, literary criticism, and of course—women’s, gender, and sexuality, as well as queer, studies. Inspired by a growing body of work that reconsiders older ecofeminist interventions and proposes that we think in terms of newer posthuman futures, our critical, interdisciplinary conversations will allow us to investigate the possibilities and challenges of thinking gender in and through the environment.

required texts

- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002
- Steingraber, Sandra. *Living Downstream: A Scientist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*. Vintage Books New York, 1997.
- One “material memoir” of your choice:
 - Antonetta, Susanne. *Body Toxic: An Environmental Memoir*. Counterpoint Press, 2002.
 - Iversen, Kristen. *Full Body Burden: Growing Up in the Nuclear Shadow of Rocky Flats*. Broadway Books, 2013.
 - Williams, Terry Tempest. *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*. Vintage Books, 1992.

Additional articles are either linked below (logon through the Yale network) or will be posted to

Course Reserves. Films are available at the Whitney Film Study Center. For those of you without a background in women's, gender, and sexuality studies (or for those of you who want a refresher), this volume will be on reserve at Bass:

- Wilchins, Riki. 2004. *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*. Alyson Books.

assignments and evaluation

(All page counts below presume 12-point font, 1" margins, and double-spacing)

Digital Engagements 20% (Submit via email, to Prof. A-J + your colleague)

By **noon on alternating Mondays** you will post **at least three** contributions to our collective Tumblr: <http://genderjusticeenvironment.tumblr.com>. Be sure to also include **at least three** generative tags for each post, including #genderjusticeenviro as a hashtag and your initials.

- REQUIRED: One image or .gif + quote from the reading per week. Must have attribution for image AND quote.
- REQUIRED: One thing you didn't know/had to do some outside reading to understand from the reading. Crowd-source!
- CHOOSE: One other artifact (or more!) that relates to the reading.

By noon on alternating Mondays you will submit a 2-3 pp. letter summarizing these interventions to me and to a thinking partner I assign, explaining how/why you chose to make each contribution.

By noon on alternating Tuesdays you will write a 2-3pp. response to your colleague's interventions, cc-ing me.

Feel free to post on weeks that are not your own, if you're moved to!

NB: Late, incomplete, or underdeveloped submissions will be automatically docked 1 point (of 2).

Material Memoir Review 25% (Submit under "Assignments" on Classesv2)

For your midterm project, you will read one of three memoirs on your own: *Body Toxic* (Antonetta), *Refuge* (Williams), or *Full Body Burden* (Iversen). In 7-8 pages, bring your chosen text into conversation with Alaimo's essay, Steingraber's memoir/documentary, and at least one other thinker on our syllabus. How do these authors narrativize body burden? What is successful? What is not?

Due Friday, 6 March at noon.

Visualizing Body Burden 20% (Submit under "Assignments" on Classesv2)

For your final presentation, you will each present a 4-5 minute (and NO LONGER) edited video that derives from, gives us a sense of, and/or sums up your *Body (Auto)Biography*. You must specify which body and environment/s you have chosen to understand, and how gender/sexuality figure into your analysis. Otherwise: anything goes with this! You might create something reflective or documentary or animated or conceptual or didactic—or some mash-up thereof. Your work will be assessed entirely upon how creatively and imaginatively you use this medium to develop an engaging and informative presentation about how we might visualize body burden. If you need help with this project beyond our in-class workshop, contact media.techs@yale.edu to set up an appointment with a Media Tech in Bass Library. More resources here: <http://www.yale.edu/bassmedialab>

In order to submit your video for evaluation and screening, you will upload it to Youtube, then send me the link to your project. Please opt for an "unlisted" rather than a "private" status if you choose to limit access to your video. [The difference is parsed here.](#)

Due Monday, 20 April at noon. (Submit for WIP workshop: **Friday, 3 April at noon.**)

Narrativizing Body Burden: 25% (Submit under "Assignments" on Classesv2)

For your final project, you will submit a *Body (Auto)Biography*: your own attempt at narrativizing body burden. In this assignment you will consider a body (your own, or someone else's) and its relationship to the various environments with/in which it has lived. While the format of this narrative is open, you must specify which body and environment/s you have chosen to understand, and how gender/sexuality figure into your analysis. In 10-12 tightly crafted pages, your task is to mobilize our readings as well as your own external research to write a deeply contextualized history of a body's multiscalar entanglements with the world.

Recommended Reading:

- Dumit, Joe. "[Writing the Implosion: Teaching the World One Thing at a Time.](#)" *Cultural Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (2014)

Due Friday, 1 May at noon. (Submit for WIP workshop: **Friday, 10 April at noon.**)

Class Participation 10%

Attendance at class sessions and informed participation in discussions are requirements for both your individual and our collective success in this course. This also includes engagement with our speakers and on our field trips. Anything beyond one unexcused absence must be explained (or forewarned) in writing, accompanied by a Dean's Excuse.

course policies

*Academic Integrity: If you have any questions about what might constitute plagiarism, please don't hesitate to ask. A shorthand definition is this: the submission of written work that either is (or contains samples of) work that is not your own and lacks recognizable citations. If you have questions about how to cite sources, please see me during my office hours. One resource for you is [Yale's statement on academic honesty](#). I ask that all students take [the Writing Center's Plagiarism Quiz](#) (and take note of conventions for citing sources) by the end of the first week of term.

*Attendance: Punctual (and faithful) attendance, as well as active participation in class discussions, are requirements for both your individual and our collective success in this course. You must submit a Dean's Excuse to secure an excused absence or authorization to submit late work. Incompletes will not be granted, except in extraordinary circumstances. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absence from class. If any course assignments are difficult to fulfill because of conflicts with days of observance, please let me know to make alternative arrangements.

*Classroom Community: This course will take on challenging questions about gender, sex, and sexuality, and we will endeavor to discuss both the course materials and our responses to them in a candid manner. In this community of thinkers demonstrating your maturity will be paramount, as will an agreement to respect our classroom as a productive space for expression, respectful challenge, and careful critique. As we attempt to work and speak across our differences, I ask that you contribute your ideas in a mode that seeks to advance our conversations. As you participate, you should think not only about your own contributions, but also about the overall classroom dynamic: who is speaking more, who less? How might you contribute to an atmosphere that enables everyone to participate meaningfully?

*Required Readings: All of our weekly readings should be completed (and digested!) before our class meetings. Come prepared to lay out the authors' basic arguments and key points, as well as to answer any questions posed to structure your reading. Also be prepared to tell us what you think about what you've read: have an opinion! I expect that you read critically, that is, with an eye to the assumptions, claims, and conclusions of the authors. In other words, I expect you to derive from your reading not simply a knowledge of its content, but also the ways in which these authors understand and work with broader concepts. As the semester progresses, you will be encouraged to draw earlier readings into your written work and class discussions. My strong suggestion is that you take notes on the materials you read to aid you in this task.

*Technology: This is your chance to unplug from the multitasking grind—use it! Silence your mobile phones before entering our classroom. Laptops and tablets are permitted, but **only** for use as an aid in note-taking and other course related activities—i.e. for purposes that advance rather than obstruct our collective goals. Non-course-related email, IM-ing, social networking, etc. are not acceptable uses of technology in our classroom. Prepare to have your class participation evaluation suffer should these be the uses to which you put your tech devices.

resources

*Office Hours: I will be available to meet with students by appointment. [Sign up for a slot here.](#)

*Communication: Please feel free to send me questions via email; I will attempt to respond to all electronic communication sent Monday-Thursday within 24 hours. Do be mindful of appropriate standards for professional communication (modes of address, formal writing conventions, etc.) when you drop a line. You don't have to have an earth-shaking reason to communicate with me—in fact, I welcome feedback on how our class is going or conversations about topics that we haven't had time to address during class.

*Accessibility: Yale College's Resource Office on Disabilities facilitates accommodations for students with documented disabilities. [You can find more information on their services here.](#) Beyond that office's specific interventions, I am committed to principles of universal learning, meaning that I strive to make our seminar experience as inclusive as possible. Please talk to me about your individual learning needs and about how this course can best accommodate them.

*Writing Assistance: You have a variety of resources available to you to support you in your writing, including your peers/colleagues, your residential college's Writing Tutor, and the Writing Partners at the Yale College Writing Center. Use these resources! Do. Not. Submit. A. First. Draft... Ever.

course outline

introductions

13 January

Film Screening: <i>American Experience: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring</i> (1993)
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a (north american) origin story

20 January

Group A posts/Group B responds

- Carson, Rachel. Selections from *Silent Spring*: Ch.1-5; 10-14. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2002.
- Seager, Joni. "[Rachel Carson Died of Breast Cancer: The Coming of Age of Feminist Environmentalism.](#)" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003)

from ecofeminism to feminisms in the anthropocene

27 January

Group B posts/Group A responds

- Daly, Mary. Selection from *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Beacon Press, 1978.
- Lorde, Audre. "An Open Letter to Mary Daly." in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1983): 94-97
- Smith, Andy. "Ecofeminism through an Anticolonial Framework," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Kay Warren, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Sturgeon, Noël. "[Ecofeminist Appropriations and Transnational Environmentalisms.](#)" *Identities* 6, no. 2-3 (1999)

Recommended:

- Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona. "A Genealogy of Ecofeminism" in *The Good-Natured Feminist: Ecofeminism and the Quest for Democracy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

3 February

Group A posts/Group B responds

- Alaimo, Stacy. "[Cyborg and Ecofeminist Interventions: Challenges for An Environmental Feminism.](#)" *Feminist Studies* 20, no. 1 (1994)
- Haraway, Donna J. "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 2013.
- Gibson-Graham, J K. "[A Feminist Project of Belonging for the Anthropocene.](#)" *Gender, Place & Culture* 18, no. 1 (2011)
- Harris, Angela P. "[Vulnerability and Power in the Age of the Anthropocene.](#)" *Washington and Lee Journal of Energy, Climate, and the Environment* (2014)

toxic bodies + big chemical

10 February

Group B posts/Group A responds

Workshop: Gwyneth Crowley, Yale University Libraries, on our course guide/final projects

- Anglin, Mary K. "[Dismantling the Master's House: Cancer Activists, Discourses of Prevention, and Environmental Justice.](#)" *Identities* 5, no. 2 (1998)
- Diedrich, Lisa, and Emily Boyce. " ['Breast Cancer on Long Island': The Emergence of a New Object Through Mapping Practices.](#)" *BioSocieties* 2, no. 2 (2007)
- Langston, Nancy "Gender Transformed: Endocrine Disruptors in the Environment" in *Seeing Nature Through Gender*, 129-166.

- Roberts, Celia. "[Drowning in a Sea of Estrogens: Sex Hormones, Sexual Reproduction and Sex.](#)" *Sexualities* 6, no. 2 (2003)

17 February

Group A posts/Group B responds

Guest lecture: Professor Nicole Deziel, on exposure science + environmental health

- Alaimo, Stacy. "[MCS Matters: Material Agency in the Science and Practices of Environmental Illness.](#)" *TOPLA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 21 (2009)
- Chen, Mel Y. "[Toxic Animacies, Inanimate Affections.](#)" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, no. 2-3 (2011)
- Heise, Ursula. "Toxic Bodies, Corporate Poisons: Local Risks and Global Systems" in *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: the Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Murphy, Michelle. "[Chemical Regimes of Living.](#)" *Environmental History* 13, no. 4 (2008): 695-703.

SPECIAL EVENTS 18, 19, 20 February: [Dipesh Chakrabarty at the Whitney Humanities Center.](#)

- Recommended: Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "[The Climate of History: Four Theses.](#)" *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 197-222.

narrativizing body burden

24 February

Group B posts/Group A responds

Workshop: Edward O'Neill, Yale University Libraries, on visual communication

- Alaimo, Stacy. "Material Memoirs: Science, Autobiography, and the Substantial Self" in *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Steingraber, Sandra. *Living Downstream: A Scientist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*. Vintage Books New York, 1997.

SPECIAL EVENT 25 February: Lisa Paravisini-Gebert at the Whitney Humanities Center, 5pm.

3 March

NO POSTS/RESPONSES

- Steingraber, Sandra. *Living Downstream: A Scientist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*. Vintage Books New York, 1997.

Film Screening: *Living Downstream* First Run Features (2010)

inter-species entanglements

24 March

Group A posts/Group B responds

Guest lecture: David Skelly, Peabody Museum, on amphibian intersex

MEET AT GREELEY LAB, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies

- Aviv, Rachel. "[A Valuable Reputation.](#)" *The New Yorker*, February 10, 2014.
- Hayes, Tyrone B. "[There Is No Denying This: Defusing the Confusion About Atrazine.](#)" *Bioscience* 54, no. 12 (2004): 1138-1149.
- Moore, Lisa Jean. "[Speciesism.](#)" *Contexts* 12, no. 1 (2013)
- Smits, Adrienne P, David K Skelly, and Susan R Bolden. "[Amphibian Intersex in Suburban Landscapes.](#)" *Ecosphere* 5, no. 1 (2014)

31 March

Group B posts/Group A responds

- Ah-King, Malin, and Eva Hayward. "[Toxic Sexes: Perverting Pollution and Queering Hormone Disruption.](#)" *O-zone: A Journal of Object Oriented Studies* 1 (2013)
- DiChiro, Giovanna. "Polluted Politics? Confronting Toxic Discourse, Sex Panic, and Eco-Normativity" in Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Martin, Emily. "[The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles.](#)" *Signs* 16, no. 3 (1991): 485–501.
- Zimmer, Carl. "[Can Hermaphrodites Teach Us What It Means to be Male?](#)" *This View of Life*, January 4, 2015.

7 April

Group A posts/Group B responds

Workshop: Visualizing Body Burden, Works in Progress

- Haraway, Donna J. "When Species Meet," in *When Species Meet*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008
- Hayward, Eva. "[Spider City Sex.](#)" *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 20, no. 3 (2010)
- Hird, Myra. "[Animal Transex.](#)" *Australian Feminist Studies* 21, no. 49 (2006)

posthuman futures?

14 April

Group B posts/Group A responds

Workshop: Narrativizing Body Burden, Works in Progress

- Adams, Carol J. "[Why Feminist-Vegan Now?](#)" *Feminism & Psychology* 20, no. 3 (2010)
- Deckha, Maneesha. "[Toward a Postcolonial, Posthumanist Feminist Theory: Centralizing Race and Culture in Feminist Work on Nonhuman Animals.](#)" *Hypatia* 27, no. 3 (2012): 527-545.
- Neimanis, Astrida. "[Morning Sickness and Gut Sociality: Towards a Posthumanist Feminist Phenomenology.](#)" *Janus Head* 13, no. 1 (2013)

final conversations

21 April

NO POSTS/RESPONSES

Presentations: Visualizing Entanglement, Imagining Justice

Guest Respondent/s TBA