

## **Writing Climate Change**

WRI 101 (S)

Fall 2015

MWF 8:30-9:20

Chambers 1045

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Office hours: Monday 2-4 pm, Tuesday 8-10 am, Wednesday 2-4 pm, and by appointment

### **Course description**

We read, watch, and listen to climate change stories all the time: scary stories, hopeful stories, stories that function on global and more intimate scales. And we can picture the images these stories conjure: polar bears on ice, shrinking glaciers, parched landscapes, displaced communities. In this course, we're going to focus on climate change storytelling. What stories do people tell about climate change, and what are the stakes of these stories? Do some stories, angles, characters, or genres work better than others? (And what kind of work can climate change stories do?) This course takes as a starting premise that there is scientific consensus around the reality of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. Though we'll read plenty about the science of climate change, we won't be studying the science; rather, we will explore climate change storytelling as a way to think about—and practice—constructing arguments, using evidence, and experimenting with form. Together we will examine how journalists, scholars, filmmakers, and scientists frame questions and construct narratives about climate change. We'll also grapple with the place of storytelling in the public sphere, and add our own voices, stories, and arguments to contemporary conversations about climate change.

### **Learning outcomes**

Though the specific reading and writing projects assigned across the many first-year writing courses vary, all Writing 101 courses embrace four instructional objectives:

- (a) reading texts closely and critically for analytic and rhetorical purposes
- (b) making fair and effective use of the work of others
- (c) drafting and revising arguments
- (d) making smart use of the library's print and digital resources to serve scholarly interest and writerly goals

### **Required texts**

Joshua Howe, *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming* (2014)

Elizabeth Kolbert, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* (2015)

Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (2015)

Philippe Squarzoni, *Climate Changed: A Personal Journey Through the Science* (2014)

Kate L. Turabian, et al, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, Eighth Edition: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (2013)

All other assigned readings will be made available to you on Moodle. **Please print them out and bring them to class.**

## **Overview of writing assignments**

Four in-depth assignments (labeled essays in the course calendar below), all of which will be workshopped and revised

Six media analysis assignments (shorter pieces in response to a prompt and/or instructions to find and analyze a particular kind of source)

Additional preparatory and informal writing

## **Description of required writing**

The writing assignments in this course are inspired by the different kinds of texts we'll be reading and discussing: long-form journalism, scholarly books and articles, documentary films, post-apocalyptic fiction, even a graphic memoir. Alongside our analytical exploration of the different ways stories about climate change are told, we'll also model some of our own writing on the range of narratives we'll study. Some of these assignments will be formal, academic papers, while others will offer you opportunities to experiment. All will require careful attention to form and content. In addition to these assignments, we'll be doing quite a bit of informal writing, some of which I'll collect, and some of which will be just for you. These exercises will help you to develop and refine your ideas, and may serve as the basis for more formal assignments. A practical note: Please be sure to SAVE (and back up!) all of the work you submit this semester (drafts and revised versions), in hard copy and digital form, as you will want to refer to earlier assignments as you work on your final essay assignment.

## **Guidelines for submission of written work**

The work you turn in for this class should be double-spaced, in 12 pt Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins. Put your name, the course number (WRI 101 S), and the date at the top of the first page. Number your pages. No cover sheets. If you are turning in a final version of one of the four essay assignments, remember to include your note of acknowledgement and your affirmation of your adherence to the Davidson Honor Code. Most of the time, I will ask you to submit your work via Moodle, but if I request a hard copy of an assignment, please staple your work. Double-sided printing is encouraged. When citing ideas and/or texts that are not your own, please use a standard citation format. (We will review how to do this in class.) Also, **remember to proofread**.

## **Online resource**

I want to bring your attention to a website found on the Writing Program's homepage, "Composing Arguments: A Resource on Academic Writing for Davidson Students." At times, we may look specifically at sections of the site in class, but it is an incredibly rich resource, and you should feel free to consult it at any time for advice about reading, making and developing arguments, revising your work, and citing your sources properly. You can find it here:  
<http://sites.davidson.edu/composingarguments/>

## **Writing Center**

I encourage you to take advantage of the support and services available at the Davidson Writing Center. We'll be spending plenty of time working on our writing in class, but you should feel free to seek out additional readers—and resources—as you write and revise, revise, revise. The Writing Center is located on the first floor of the library and is open afternoons and evenings beginning Sunday, September 6. You can sign up for an appointment online at [davidson.mywconline.com](http://davidson.mywconline.com).

### **Requirement for conferences**

You are required to meet with me at least twice during the semester – once before week 8, and once after. I am available during office hours and by appointment, and am happy to meet with you in addition to the required conferences.

### **Policy on absences and lateness**

You are allowed two absences, no questions asked. Additional absences will impact your grade in this class: for each unexcused absence beyond the two you are allowed, your final grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter. If you do miss a class meeting, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and making up the work so that you are prepared for the next class meeting. Please be on time; lateness will also affect your grade. If you need to miss class due to illness, emergency, athletics, religious observance, etc., please talk with me as soon as you can. Please also note that it is Davidson College policy that a student who misses more than 25% of scheduled class meetings will earn a failing grade in the course.

### **Late work**

Though I do not assign individual essays letter grades (see grading policy below), late assignments will factor into your overall grade in the course. (Please see my grading policy below.) Also, if you are late to class on a day that an assignment is due, the assignment will also be considered late.

### **The public domain**

This is a course centered on writing, and as such, we will be spending time in class workshopping our writing with our peers. All writing in this course may be read by and shared with all members of the class.

### **Davidson policies**

I respect and adhere to Davidson College policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays, assistance available to students with disabilities, plagiarism and academic integrity, sexual harassment, and racial or ethnic discrimination. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with these policies and are encouraged to discuss any questions or concerns they may have with me.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities and learning differences**

Full accommodations are the legal right of students with all kinds of disabilities, whether learning differences or physical disabilities. I am happy to provide these accommodations. If you are a student with a learning disability who might need accommodations, please identify yourself to me in the first two weeks of class so that I can learn from you as early as possible how best to support your learning in this course. All such discussion will be confidential unless you stipulate otherwise.

### **Academic honesty and notes of acknowledgement**

It is expected that you will abide by Davidson's honor pledge in all of your work. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the college's policy on plagiarism. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or proper citation, please feel free to ask!

When you turn in the final versions of each of your four essays, I will also ask you to include a note of acknowledgement—a footnote where you thank those who have helped you to think about, revise, refine, and edit your work, along with an affirmation of your adherence to the

Davidson Honor Code. Academia is a scholarly community — a scholarly community that you will be participating in as both a reader and a writer. I think we often imagine that scholarly work happens when academics sit by themselves with their piles of books, but more often, our ideas evolve in conversation with other people. This note is an opportunity to acknowledge the way that members of your community—readers, tutors, librarians, friends, others—have helped you to refine your ideas and your writing. For example: *I would like to thank Van H. for sharing his insights about the teaching of writing, and for describing the ways he uses notes of acknowledgement in his WRI 101 courses here at Davidson. I have adhered to the Davidson Honor Code in completing this assignment.*

### **Grading policy**

This class offers us a unique opportunity: to focus on both process and product. Your grade will be based on the entirety of your written work and class participation over the course of the semester, but because this is a writing seminar, you will not receive letter or number grades on individual assignments. Instead, you will receive detailed written feedback on your writing from me, and on occasion, from your peers. The work you will do in this class is part of a conversation, both with me and with your classmates. I like to think of my comments as my side of this conversation about your work.

If you do all the work — by participating thoughtfully and regularly in class discussions, fulfilling all course requirements, and putting in the time to draft, revise, and polish your essays — you can expect to earn a grade in the B range (B-, B, B+). If you not only meet these expectations but also exceed them and consistently generate excellent writing, you can earn a grade in the A range. If, on the other hand, you do not fulfill these requirements and your work does not meet expectations, your grade will be adjusted accordingly. Note: you must complete all of the essay assignments in order to earn a passing grade in this class.

Rather than adding to anxiety about grades and performance, my goal with this approach is to decouple letter grades from thoughtful engagement with your writing, my comments about your writing, and the feedback you offer (and receive from) your peers. I will provide you with an approximate letter grade and written comments on your coursework and participation at the semester's halfway point, so that you have a sense of how I think things are going. I will also highlight things to focus on during the second half of the class. And of course, I am always happy to talk with you about your progress in the course during office hours or by appointment.

### **A note on technology**

This course is a seminar, which means that it is grounded in the conversations we'll have together. While I imagine that many of us will utilize computers, tablets, and/or cell phones to access course materials and write papers, I ask that you put your technology away during class time. Seminars offer us an opportunity to get to know each other, and it can be hard to connect across a table or around a room when we're all looking at screens instead of at the people we're talking with!

## **COURSE CALENDAR** (subject to change)

### **A few notes:**

**Readings are listed by discussion date; please come to class prepared.**

**Readings with (M) next to them on this calendar can be found on Moodle.**

**Major writing assignments—essays and the media analysis assignments—are noted on the calendars below. Often the assignment sheets I give to you will include sub-assignments, such as essay workplans or preparatory writing, which we'll use to develop our ideas and our arguments.**

**Please note the due dates for Media Analysis assignments, drafts, and final versions of essays — these assignments are often due outside of class. (If you'd rather have an actual calendar to visualize the rhythm of our reading and writing this semester, I've included one at the end of the syllabus.)**

### **Week 1:**

Monday, August 24: Introductions and Expectations

Wednesday, August 26: Naomi Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change," *Science* Vol. 306: 3 Dec 2004, p.1686 (M)

Media Analysis A prompt distributed

### **Media Analysis A due 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, August 28: Media Analysis Workshop

### **Week 2:**

Monday, August 31: Elizabeth Kolbert, *Field Notes From a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* pp. 1-34

Media Analysis B prompt distributed

Wednesday, September 2: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, pp. 35-66

### **Media Analysis B due 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, September 4: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, pp. 67-90 and  
Essay 1 prompt distributed

### **Week 3:**

Monday, September 7: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, pp. 93-132 and Killingsworth excerpt (M)

Wednesday, September 9: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, pp. 133-189

### **ESSAY 1A DUE 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, September 11: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, Essay 1 Workshop

**Week 4:**

Monday, September 14: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, pp. 193-235

Wednesday, September 16: Kolbert, *Field Notes*, pp. 236-278

**ESSAY 1B DUE 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, September 18: MEET IN LIBRARY (Room TBA)

Media Analysis C prompt distributed

**Week 5:**

Monday, September 21: BRING PRIMARY SOURCE (MA C Part 1) for primary source workshop (regular room)

Wednesday, September 23: Conevery Bolton Valencius, "Vernacular Science: Knowing Earthquakes in the Early United States," in *The Lost History of the New Madrid Earthquakes* (2013), pp. 175-215 (M)

**Media Analysis C due 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, September 25: Media Analysis Workshop

**Week 6:**

Monday, September 28: Joshua Howe, *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming*, pp. 3-43

Wednesday, September 30: Howe, *Behind the Curve*, pp. 44-66

Friday, October 2: Howe, *Behind the Curve*, pp. 67-92

**Week 7:**

Monday, October 5: Howe, *Behind the Curve*, pp. 93-117  
Media Analysis D prompt distributed

Wednesday, October 7: Howe, *Behind the Curve*, 118-146

**Media Analysis D due 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, October 9: Howe, *Behind the Curve*: pp. 147-169

FALL BREAK

FRIDAY, October 9 (4:30 P.M.) - WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14 (8:30 A.M.)

**Week 8:**

Wednesday, October 14: Howe, *Behind the Curve*, pp. 170-209  
Media Analysis E prompt distributed

**\*\* FIRST EVENING FILM SCREENING: AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH (2006)\*\* CHAMBERS 2164**

**ESSAY 2B DUE 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, October 16: Essay 2 Workshop

**Week 9:**

Monday, October 19: Philippe Squarzoni, *Climate Changed: A Personal Journey Through the Science*, pp. 8-145

Wednesday, October 21: Squarzoni, *Climate Changed*, pp. 146-222

Friday, October 23: **NO CLASS, DR. KOHOUT AT CONFERENCE, BUT KEEP READING!**

Squarzoni, *Climate Changed*, pp. 222-294

**ESSAY 2C DUE BY 9 PM FRIDAY via Moodle**

**Week 10:**

Monday, October 26: Squarzoni, *Climate Changed*, pp. 296-389

**ESSAY 3A DUE MONDAY in class**

Wednesday, October 28: Squarzoni, *Climate Changed*, pp. 390-467

**\*\*SECOND EVENING FILM SCREENING: CHASING ICE (2012)\*\* CHAMBERS 2164**

**Media Analysis E due 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, October 30: Media Analysis Workshop

**Week 11:**

**ESSAY 3B DUE 9 PM SUNDAY via Moodle**

Monday, November 2: Essay 3 Workshop

Wednesday, November 4: Dana Luciano, "The Inhuman Anthropocene," *Avidly/LA Review of Books*, 22 March 2015 (M) and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Winter 2009), pp. 197-222 (M)

Friday, November 6: Roy Scranton, "Learning How to Die in the Anthropocene" *The New York Times* 10 November 2013 (M)

**Week 12:**

Monday, November 9: Naomi Klein, "One Way or Another Everything Changes," excerpt from *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* published 17 September 2014 at *Democracy Now!* (M) and Janis Dickinson, "The People Paradox: Self-Esteem Striving, Immortality Ideologies, and Human Response to Climate Change," *Ecology and Society* 14 (1): 34 (M)

Wednesday, November 11: Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow," in *Silent Spring* (1962) (M) and excerpt from Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us* (2007) (M)

**ESSAY 3C DUE 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, November 13: Essay 3 Appreciation

**Week 13:**

Monday, November 16: Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven*, pp. 3-32  
Media Analysis F prompt distributed

Wednesday, November 18: Mandel, *Station Eleven*, pp. 35-67

**Media Analysis F due 9 PM THURSDAY**

Friday, November 20: Mandel, *Station Eleven*, pp. 71-115 and Media Analysis Workshop

**Week 14:**

Monday, November 23: Mandel, *Station Eleven*, pp. 119-196  
Essay 4 prompt distributed

THANKSGIVING BREAK

HAVE FUN AND BRING *STATION ELEVEN* WITH YOU IF YOU'RE TRAVELING!

**Week 15:**

Monday, November 30: Mandel, *Station Eleven*, pp. 199-283

Wednesday, December 2: Mandel, *Station Eleven*, pp. 283-333

**ESSAY 4A DUE 9 PM THURSDAY via Moodle**

Friday, December 4: Essay 4 Workshop (Structure/focus of workshop TBD)

**Week 16:**

Monday, December 7: Rebecca Solnit, excerpt from *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (2005) (M) and current news coverage of COP21 (M)

Wednesday, December 9: Wrap Up (Last Class Meeting)

**Week 17:**

December 11-17 (Exams): **ESSAY 4 DUE TO ME BY THE END OF THE EXAM PERIOD.**

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>1</b>	Aug. 24 Introductions and Expectations	Aug. 25	Aug. 26 Oreskes article (M)	Aug. 27 MA A DUE 9 PM	Aug. 28 MA WORKSHOP
<b>2</b>	Aug. 31 Kolbert, <i>Field Notes</i> , pp. 1-34	Sept. 1	Sept. 2 Kolbert, pp. 35-66	Sept. 3 MA B DUE 9 PM	Sept. 4 MA WORKSHOP Kolbert, pp. 67-90
<b>3</b>	Sept. 7 Kolbert, pp. 93-132 Killingsworth excerpt (M)	Sept. 8	Sept. 9 Kolbert, pp. 133-189	Sept. 10 Essay 1A DUE 9 PM	Sept. 11 Essay 1A WORKSHOP
<b>4</b>	Sept. 14 Kolbert, pp. 193-235	Sept. 15	Sept. 16 Kolbert, pp. 236-278	Sept. 17 <b>ESSAY 1B DUE 9 PM</b>	Sept. 18 MEET IN LIBRARY
<b>5</b>	Sept. 21 PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHOP (bring article for your MA C)	Sept. 22	Sept. 23 Valencius article (M)	Sept. 24 MA C DUE 9 PM	Sept. 25 MA WORKSHOP
<b>6</b>	Sept. 28 Howe, <i>Behind the Curve</i> pp. 3-43	Sept. 29	Sept. 30 Howe, pp. 44-66	Oct. 1	Oct. 2 Howe, pp. 67-92
<b>7</b>	Oct. 5 Howe, pp. 93-117	Oct. 6	Oct. 7 Howe, pp. 118-146	Oct. 8 MA D DUE 9 PM	Oct. 9 MA WORKSHOP Howe, pp. 147-169
<b>8</b>	Oct. 12 <i>Fall Break</i>	Oct. 13 <i>Fall Break</i>	Oct. 14 Howe, pp. 170-209 SCREENING 8 PM	Oct. 15 ESSAY 2B DUE 9 PM	Oct. 16 ESSAY 2B WORKSHOP
<b>9</b>	Oct. 19 Swarzoni, <i>Climate Changed</i> , pp. 8-145	Oct. 20	Oct. 21 Swarzoni, pp. 146-222	Oct. 22	Oct. 23 NO CLASS Swarzoni, 222-294 <b>ESSAY 2C DUE 9 PM</b>
<b>10</b>	Oct. 26 ESSAY 3A DUE IN CLASS Swarzoni, 296-389	Oct. 27	Oct. 28 Swarzoni, 389-467 SCREENING 8 PM	Oct. 29 MA E DUE 9 PM	Oct. 30 MA WORKSHOP
<b>11</b>	Nov. 2 ESSAY 3B DUE SUN 9PM ESSAY 3B WORKSHOP	Nov. 3	Nov. 4 Luciano article (M) Chakrabarty article (M)	Nov. 5	Nov. 6 Scranton article (M)
<b>12</b>	Nov. 9 Klein article (M) Dickinson article (M)	Nov. 10	Nov. 11 Carson excerpt (M) Weisman article (M)	Nov. 12 ESSAY 3C DUE 9 PM	Nov. 13 <b>ESSAY 3 APPRECIATION</b>
<b>13</b>	Nov. 16 Mandel, <i>Station Eleven</i> , pp. 3-32	Nov. 17	Nov. 18 Mandel, pp. 35-67	Nov. 19 MA F DUE 9 PM	Nov. 20 MA WORKSHOP Mandel, pp. 71-115
<b>14</b>	Nov. 23 Mandel, pp. 119-196	Nov. 24	Nov. 25 <i>Thanksgiving Break</i>	Nov. 26 <i>Thanksgiving Break</i>	Nov. 27
<b>15</b>	Nov. 30 Mandel, pp. 199-283	Dec. 1	Dec. 2 Mandel, pp. 283-333	Dec. 3 ESSAY 4A DUE 9 PM	Dec. 4 ESSAY 4A WORKSHOP
<b>16</b>	Dec. 7 Solnit excerpt (M) and COP21 news (M)	Dec. 8	Dec. 9 Last day of class	Dec. 10	Dec. 11

**ESSAY 4 DUE BY DEC 17 (END OF FINALS)**