

Ecological Art: from Berlin to an international perspective

Winter Semester 2023/24: 16 October 2023 – 30 November 2023

CATEGORY

Literature and Art

COURSE STRUCTURE

4 contact hours à 45 min per week (winter semester: 8 weeks)

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Time

Day: Thursday, 14-18 c.t. (2:15 – 5:45 pm), 19 October – 7 December 2023

Place

Room: 0323-26

Hausvogteiplatz 5-7

COURSE LANGUAGE

To be able to handle the academic readings and discussions required in the course, students must possess proficiency in English at the B1 level. Materials for general class participation must be in English so that all can participate. The assignments should be in English, Portuguese, Spanish, or Italian.

Language requirements (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
English B1

TARGET GROUP

International exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic. Berlin Perspectives courses are designed for undergraduate students. Master students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

This course is directed at students interested in a wide range of topics: arts, ecology, decolonialism, eco feminisms, contemporary arts, nature, landscape and eco-art. The students should be able to read and critically analyze academic writing, exhibitions, curatorial projects, and art projects and practices.

CREDITS = 5 ECTS

The Berlin Perspectives courses are offered by the Career Center as part of the elective program üWP. Registration takes place via Agnes.

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is nature an invented concept? Is the concept of nature the same in Germany and the Global South? How has art influenced the idea of ecology and nature? Looking at recent history, since at least the mid-1800s, German art has often explored the conflict between nature and culture. Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840) is known for his crucial role in reflecting on the relationship between humans and nature. From a different perspective, in the mid-1900, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) connected art and politics by founding the Green Party, discoursing in favor of the environment, and creating concrete artistic works, such as "7.000 Eichen".

Even today, the city of Berlin has several art projects that reflect the role of art in ecology and the relationship between culture and nature. The aim of the course is to investigate these relationship, focusing on the German perspective, but without neglecting the "foreign" experiences brought by the international students on the course. To this end, we will also analyze few ecological art proposals developed in the Global South.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Knowledge

This course is designed to help students gain a critical perspective on the relationship between art and ecology. By examining the perspectives of both German and Latin American cultures, students will actively engage in this process. To fully understand how art, politics, ecology, nature, forests, culture and the Anthropocene intersect, a thorough study and investigation of related concepts is required. Upon completion of the course, students will have the necessary skills to analyze and interpret these complex connections.

Academic / Transferable Skills

- Recognize and express ideas related to nature, landscape, Anthropocene, culture, and ecology;
- Investigate relationships between art and ecology especially from the end of the 18th century to the present;
- Analyze and think deeply about the environmental issues of our time and consider how art can assist in this reflection;
- Reflect on how the concept of European nature and ecology contributed to creating an idea of colonial nature in the tropics;
- Understand and map the artistic and cultural manifestations of Brazil and Latin America in their differences and confluences with the German and European cultural ecological debate;
- Enhance one's critical thinking, writing skills and ability to express themselves through both visual and written mediums.

Competencies:

Students should acquire the following skills and competencies:

- Recognize and situate themselves in the ideas related to nature, Anthropocene, culture and ecology;
- Analyze the environmental issues and consider how art can assist in this reflection;
- Compare ecological art in Germany and Brazil;
- Enhance writing skills in order to express themselves through both visual and written mediums;
- Use an iconological methodology to analyze images.

READINGS

ARENDT, Bergit. *Contemporary art, archives and environmental change in the age of the Anthropocene*. London: Royal Holloway University, 2017.

COCCIA, Emanuele. *The life of plants. A Metaphysics of Mixture*. Trans. Dylan J. Montanari. Medford: Polity Press, 2018.

GAARD, Greta. "Toward a queer ecofeminism" In: *Hypatia*, vol. 12, n. 1, pp. 114-137. Cambridge University Press: 1997.

KOERNER, Joseph Leo. *Caspar David Friedrich and the subject of landscape*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009.

KOPENAWA, Davi; ALBERT, Bruce. *The falling sky. Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Trans. Nicholas Elliott and Alison Dundy. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2023.

FLUSSER, Vilém. *Natural: mind*. Trans. Rodrigo Maltez Novaes. Minnesota: Univocal, 2013.

LATOUR, Bruno. "Circulating reference: sampling the soil in the Amazon Forest". In: ____ *Pandora's hope: essays on the reality of science studies*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press: 1999, pp. 24-79.

LOKMAN, Kees; HERRINGTON, Susan. "Gardens as Migratory Devices". In: *New Geographies Journal*, n. 8, pp. 140-151. Island: 2016.

MANCUSO, Stefano. *The nation of plants. A Radical Manifesto for Humans*. Trans. Gregory Conti. London: Profile Books, 2022.

MERCHANT, Carolyn. "Nature as Female". In: ____ *The Death of Nature. Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution*. São Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983, pp. 1-41.

REIMER, Maria Hellström. "Unsettling Eco-scapes: Aesthetic Performances for Sustainable Futures". In: *Journal of Landscape Architecture*, vol. 5, Issue 1, p. 24-37. Netherlands: 2010.

VILAÇA, Aparecida. "Inventing Nature: Christianity and Science in Indigenous Amazonia" In: *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 9, n. 1, pp. 44-57. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019.

° Please note that some readings may be updated closer to the course time. However, all readings will be accessible through Moodle.

ASSIGNMENT INFO

Workload and assignments

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- Actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions);
- Prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions;
- Hand in the following **assignments**:
- Each student must prepare a brief presentation to the colleagues of the course. The presentation should focus on a project or artist dedicated to art and ecology based in the city of Berlin or in their home country;
- In addition to the presentation, students will be required to produce a short essay articulating the knowledge covered, with a bibliography, via Moodle. The essay can be about an art exhibition, artwork, art activism or curatorial project. The essays should preferably use at least one of the course bibliographies (between 6 and 9 thousand characters with spaces and written preferably in English, Portuguese or Spanish).

Failure to fulfill one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Flavia Scoz is a PhD researcher, teacher and visual artist. Since 2015, she has been researching the Poetics and Politics of Falling and Rising Bodies, and the impact of Gravity in Literature and Visual Arts. In her recent research, she also investigates the intersection of feminism and plant perspectives in art and ecology, with a focus on the relationship between nature and culture. She is currently working on her Ph.D. research on the "Politics of Fall and Revolt in the Visual Arts and Literature". This research is associated with the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil) and the Institute of Art and Art History at Humboldt University. In 2019 and 2020, she taught Theory of Image for the Design and Advertising courses at UNISOCIESC (Brazil). She holds a Master's degree in Literature from UFSC (2018) and a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from Santa Catarina State University (2013).

COURSE SCHEDULE (Syllabus)

4 hours à 45 min per week (8 weeks)

Week 1 (19.10.23):

Content: General presentation and introduction Nature and Culture: Is nature fiction? How can we reflect on the relationship between nature, art, and technology?

Reading:

- FLUSSER, Vilém. *Natural: mind*. Trans. Rodrigo Maltez Novaes. Minnesota: Univocal, 2013. (Excerpt to be selected).
- COCCIA, Emanuele. *The life of plants*. A Metaphysics of Mixture. Trans. Dylan J. Montanari. Medford: Polity Press, 2018. (Excerpt to be selected).

Week 2 (26.10.23):

Content: The relationship between the human and landscape in German Romanticism and the landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich.

Reading:

- Discussion on the chapter "The subject of landscape". In: KOERNER, Joseph Leo. *Caspar David Friedrich and the subject of landscape*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009. (Excerpt to be selected).

Excursion: Visiting to Museum für Naturkunde.

Week 3 (02.11.23):

Content: Joseph Beuys and the concept of social plastic

For political art, the creation of the Green Party. Is art a possibility of social plastic? Re-signifying symbols and the forest as an art project.

Contents: Nature, tech and climate crises.

Excursion: Visiting to the Exhibition "Signs of Change - Landscapes of a Warming Planet", by Olaf Otto Becker, at German Museum of Technology.

Week 4 (09.11.23):

Contents: A landscape without humans /Nature and Fiction.

Excursion: Visiting to the exhibition "Grünzeug. Plants in Contemporary Photography" at Berlinische Galerie.

Presentation: Mapping actions and projects that involve art and ecology today.

Week 5 (16.11.23):

Contents: Ecological Art Initiatives in Berlin

How contemporary art can articulate and influence the ecology debates?

Excursion: Getting to know the project and visiting the "Art Laboratory Gallery".

Presentation: Mapping actions and projects that involve art and ecology today.

Week 6 (23.11.23):

Contents: The City and the Countryside: Art and Ecology Between the City and the Countryside.

Excursion: Visiting the Domäne Dahlen Museum.

Week 7 (30.11.23):

Contents: Ecological Art and ecology from where I came from: Similarities and differences between "Arte Amazonas" - 1992 and the "1º Amazonas Biennial" - 2023; Contemporary

Indigenous Art at the 34° Biennial in São Paulo.

Reading: VILAÇA, Aparecida. "Inventing Nature: Christianity and Science in Indigenous Amazonia". In: *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 9, n. 1, pp. 44-57. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019 (Excerpt to be selected).

Week 8 (07.12.23):

Contents: Brief presentation of the essays produced and discussion. Closing of the course, comments on the contents covered and future developments. A conversation about the learning process and notes on the didactics adopted.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

in the case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

Preparation for lively discussions: be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and have points in mind for discussion or clarification.

Assignments: complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

Commitment: pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinion in this international classroom.

Academic guidelines: Comply with academic integrity policies. **Plagiarism** in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course. See **ZSP-HU** (Fächerübergreifende Satzung zur Regelung von Zulassung, Studium und Prüfung der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), **§ 111** (Täuschung).

Attendance policy: Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 15th June 2023