

Prof. Fatima Naqvi
Spring 2014
01: 090: 101
Wednesday 1:10–4:10 PM
German House 102

Our Threatened Planet: Ecology in Film

In this seminar, we will view several documentary films that deal with the threatened state of the earth's environment. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* popularized the subject, but we will focus our attention on three Austrian films. We will discuss each filmmaker's handling of the documentary mode, and the unique perspective of these artists who come from a small European country that is very concerned with environmental issues. We will also read several essays from the *New Yorker* and *The New York Times*. We are interested in the way in which these films make their argument: the types of images they privilege, the kind of rhetoric they engage in, the use of neutral or polemical narration, etc. A comparison of American vs. European narratives of environmental damage in relation to their respective political and economic circumstances will be considered.

Passing the course is dependent on handing in all assignments on the date required and attendance for all classes. No electronic submissions or late papers will be accepted. A fee of \$0.05 per page will be collected for all handouts. Readings are posted on Sakai; films are available for viewing in Alexander Library on College Avenue.

Jan. 22 Intro to environmental topics and film analysis

Clips from *Wall-E*, *Our Daily Bread* (2005)

Dan Barber, "You Say Tomato, I Say Agricultural Disaster," *The New York Times*

Jan. 29 In class: Clips from *We Feed the World* (2005)

Due: Finish viewing *Our Daily Bread* (on reserve at Alexander Library); 1 page response paper to *Our Daily Bread*

Feb. 5 In class: Clips from *Plastic Planet* (2009) and *Tapped* (2009)

Due: 1 page response paper to Elizabeth Kolbert's article "The Sixth Extinction," *The New Yorker*

Feb. 12 In class: Clips from *Darwin's Nightmare* (2004) and *Workingman's Death* (2005)

Due: 1 page response paper to Elizabeth Kolbert's article, "The Lost World," Part II, *The New Yorker*

Feb. 19 In class: Clips from *About Water* (2009) and *A World Without Water* (2006)

Due: 1 page response paper to Raffi Khatchadourian's article "The Stolen Forests," *The New Yorker*

What should a response paper do?

Your response paper should present your opinion of a film you watched or an article you read. It should marshal evidence to support your viewpoint. If, for example, you found a film boring, you should be able to describe two or three such scenes, explaining what made them boring. If you found an article interesting, the same thing pertains: you should be able to discuss two or three scenes, as well as the way in which the article made the information it imparted to you interesting. Some thoughts to guide you: What kinds of questions does this piece raise for you? What are some of the ways in which it gives rise to these questions? Is the answer to the problems the piece outlines too easy? or perhaps too impractical and/or utopian?

Response papers should be 12 point Times New Roman font, with one inch margins.