

FYC: Living in the Anthropocene: Earth in the Age of Humans
Fall 2020
Block D: 1:45pm - 3:00pm
Every day

John Kim
Media and Cultural Studies
jkim5@macalester.edu
Office hours: Tu 10-11
Office loc: Humanities 301
Zoom link:
<https://macalester.zoom.us/j/2628720664>

Roopali Phadke
Environmental Studies
phadke@macalester.edu
Office hours: W 10-11
Office loc: Olin Rice 249
Zoom link:
<https://macalester.zoom.us/j/7116505717>

Andrea Kaston Tange
English
akastont@macalester.edu
Office hours: Th 12:30-1:30
Office loc: 204 Old Main
Zoom link:
<https://macalester.zoom.us/j/819897953>

Preceptor:
Hannah Conner
hconner@macalester.edu
Office hours: TBA
Zoom link: TBA

Preceptor:
Kaela Bloemendaal
kbloemen@macalester.edu
Office hours: TBA
Zoom link: TBA

Preceptor:
Kira Schukar
kschukar@macalester.edu
Office hours: TBA
Zoom link: TBA

Course description

Geologists tell us that we have entered a new epoch called the Anthropocene, when humans have fundamentally reshaped the planet in ways that put the future of life at risk. This course will consider questions like: When did the Anthropocene begin? Who has the power to define an epoch? How have we represented environmental disasters in the past and present? What are the stories we tell ourselves about human's relationship to the Earth? Where do we find hope for our futures? A timely look at the concept of "The Anthropocene" provides us with special opportunities for self-reflection, debate and expression. Our fiction and non-fiction readings, film screenings and experiential learning will help us answer if there could be such a thing as a "good" Anthropocene rather than simply an apocalyptic one. We will develop our writing and research skills working on collaborative projects with the Twin Cities as our backdrop.

The uprisings that have been occurring around the country this year, and especially in the Twin Cities, have brought renewed focus on the legacies of racial inequality in reproducing social and environmental inequalities in this country. Accordingly, we will be foregrounding the role of race and ethnicity in our study of the Anthropocene. We will consider this in various ways, including differential environmental risk and impact, the history, legacies, and ongoing role of colonization and slavery in production of social inequalities, insurgent organizations imagining alternative social and environmental futures, and more.

This interdisciplinary course is being co-taught by faculty from three different departments: Andrea Kaston Tange (English), John Kim (Media and Cultural Studies) and Roopali Phadke

(Environmental Studies). All sections will cover the same material and meet at the same time. Students will spend time in their individual section, have opportunities to work with the other two professors, occasionally meet up in one large group that includes all three sections, and take local and regional field trips together.

We may occasionally meet outside as weather allows, and we have planned several self-guided field trips based on walking. If it will not be possible for you to join an outdoor class, or to undertake these field trips, please let us know in advance and we can discuss an alternative.

Pandemic statement

We are excited to teach this course, but the pandemic has made course planning tumultuous and complicated. It will continue to compel us to make unplanned changes to this syllabus and the course schedule in response to new developments. We will keep students informed about these changes via email, so *it is important for students to check their email and our Moodle site daily in order to stay informed.*

We aspire to teach this course in a way that meets students' and our expectations about what a liberal arts course is all about: participatory, engaged, discussion-based, and filled with surprises and challenges. Like you, we've had to shift into a remote teaching and learning situation that is different from anything we've done before. In order to keep the things we most value about small, engaging classes and collaborative learning, we've had to overhaul our teaching methods. And you can expect that throughout the semester, we will continue to refine our teaching on the basis of student feedback and our observations about how the course is going.

We have a number of students who will be taking this course entirely remotely. We need to consistently remind ourselves of the fact that we're not only teaching students on campus, but many who were not able to join us. In order to teach in an equitable way, we're planning a mix of synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods throughout the module, and we hope you will join us in our commitment to working collaboratively to ensure that all students are fully part of the course.

In order to accommodate students who will not be able to attend synchronous class meetings during this module, we plan to record our synchronous class sessions in a manner consistent with [Macalester's classroom recording policy](#). We will share these recordings in a password-protected (and not public) place. If you download any class recordings, you must store them in a password-protected file or on a password-protected site. **Please note that the recording policy clearly states that you may not share, replicate, or publish any class recording, in whole or in part, or use any of the recordings for any purpose besides knowing what happened during the class period, without our written approval.** If we hope to use any recorded content from any of our classes for purposes beyond our class, we will – in accordance with the policy – obtain your written permission to do so.

We know that this semester will carry substantial and uneven pressures for students, and that living in a pandemic means none of us can wholly predict when extra demands will fall on our time. We encourage you to reach out to us if you are facing increasing pressures, a long-term health issue, or any other crisis, so that we can better support your work in class and accommodate your needs. An incomplete for the semester will be granted only in the cases that include the support of the Student Affairs office.

Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of 1) **participation and engagement (15%)**; 2) **submission of homework assignments (24 in all, identified by HW on the daily Moodle course calendar) (35%)**; and 3) a **“final” project, which has seven parts, submitted in stages throughout the semester (50%)**. See the Moodle site for more information on actual assignments.

Participation and Engagement (15%)

As is the norm at Macalester, classes will be highly interaction and discussion based. The readings range in difficulty from popular essays to graduate-school-level articles; the number of pages assigned per class varies widely and reflects the difficulty of the reading. For example, a two-page peer reviewed scientific article may take as long to read as a twenty page chapter from a novel (Please let us know if this is not the case.)

Please read our notes about each assignment, and do the activities listed on each day of the course in the order they are listed. For example, on some days, there may be a short video to watch that serves as an introduction to a reading, while on other days the video follows the reading, and offers some analysis of it.

You are expected to come to each class meeting (which may not be every day) with the assigned homework complete and ready to participate in discussions. For those in far away time zones, we will make recordings available if you miss a synchronous session. It is important for you to attend class and complete all activities. The compressed nature of the 7.5 week module means that it is very easy to fall behind. If you miss more than two classes, it is likely to impact your participation grade. If you are having difficulty with the pace of the course, please reach out right away to your professor or preceptor for support.

To participate effectively, you should aim to speak in a way that moves a discussion forward and increases the learning for the whole group. Contributions can include questions, insights, and responses to other comments. They can also include provocative mistakes. Being “wrong” but intellectually adventurous can often help jumpstart everyone’s thinking. One powerful comment or question is worth more than many less powerful remarks. Coming to class with questions is as valuable as coming with answers.

Homework Assignments (35%)

The homework assignments are varied and include reading responses, questions for guest speakers, self-guided field trip documentation, and Perusall annotations. Of the 24 assignments, you are allowed to miss 2 without penalty. It is in your best interests to use “skip” days when your work piles up and you need to prioritize other things.

Homeworks will be graded on a 5 point scale: 1=Not satisfactory (C), 2=Satisfactory (B), 3=Good (B+), 4=Excellent (A-), 5=Outstanding (A)

Unsatisfactory - Does not engage with the question or assignment in a sufficient manner.

Satisfactory - Has addressed the most basic components of the assignment but misunderstands the goals or lacks analytic rigor.

Good - Acceptable work: clearly written and competent, could push somewhat harder on ideas or do more to analyze examples.

Excellent - Carefully detailed: uses specific examples, asks interesting questions, offers insightful analysis, draws provocative connections.

Outstanding - Reserved for truly exemplary work that meets the bar of excellent (above) but also draws on outside material, personal experiences, and moves forward and backward through course material.

Final Project (50%)

In this semester-long project, you will create a Cabinet of Curiosities that represents your personal take on the Anthropocene. The Cabinet should be based around a theme of your choosing (e.g. food containers, communication, tourist memorabilia; see the directions for the initial proposal for more details). The project has a series of due dates for steps along the way--from an initial question/proposal due in the first full week of class, to a final presentation of your collection through an unboxing video, due at the end of the semester. Each step will be graded separately. This assignment will also introduce you to our library system. Our class readings and discussions aim to inspire you to shape your collection as the semester progresses. More details are on Moodle.

Zoom Etiquette

Given the newness and unfamiliarity of online teaching, this section is subject to change and revision. Here are some preliminary thoughts about Zoom etiquette:

- We have a preference for students to keep their video on, but recognize that students are working in very different and possibly difficult circumstances. Please email your professor privately about the reasons why you would prefer to keep

your video off. Even if you keep your video off during larger class sessions, we encourage you to turn video on for small group work.

- Do not multitask while attending class. There is substantial research that multitasking means that you perform all tasks less effectively, especially when it comes to education. ([This](#) brief Mayo Clinic column has suggestions for maintaining focus.)
- Using Zoom's chat functionality during class is encouraged when it relates to what is being discussed and considered. Our preceptors will help to monitor the chat and draw the professor's and classes' attention to questions and insightful comments.
- We know you led busy lives and have to grab meals at odd times, including between classes. However, it can be really distracting to watch others eat on video. We encourage you to turn your video off while you are eating (provided this is just a short part of our class meeting).

Homework Assignments and Lateness Policy

These assignments vary and include reading-response paragraphs, annotations on documents, discussion questions, and photo documentation. Homework is due on the date listed.

Homework assignments are *usually* due in the morning, with times indicated so that we can review your responses before class meets.

It is particularly important to stick to the calendar in the syllabus, in order to get through a semester of course material in 7.5 weeks. That said, we have tried to stagger reading loads and sequence writing assignments to make the pace manageable, and we encourage you to communicate with us if you have difficulties with the pacing.

We expect assignments to be turned in on time. Homework assignments (identified as HW on the syllabus) will NOT be accepted late because they are necessary to the discussion of the material for that day. There are 24 HW assignments in total that amount to 35% of your course grade. You must do a minimum of 22 of them to get full credit for this portion of coursework. This allows you to miss up to 2 homework assignments without penalty.

All seven elements of the final project assignment must be completed to pass the course. A late element will be penalized one half letter grade for each day or portion thereof late (for example, a "B" paper submitted one class late would receive a "B-"), unless you have discussed your extenuating circumstances with your professor BEFORE the project deadline to request an extension. Circumstances that might warrant an extension include personal illness, family emergencies, or travel for Macalester-related events (e.g. athletics or field trips, should those become possible).

Course preceptors are available to support you in many ways, including talking with you about drafts of your work for the final project. Please reach out to them during their office hours or by email. If you wish to discuss drafts of your writing, you will need to meet with them during office hours; preceptors will not simply comment on drafts submitted by email.

Plagiarism

We urge you to call on your professors for help with your papers and to work with other students. Please note that just as you credit print sources from which you draw information or ideas, you should also give proper credit to others with whom you have conversation, if their ideas are substantial in shaping your own. Plagiarism will be handled according to the [Macalester policy on academic integrity](#). Additional help is available from the MAX Center: <http://www.macalester.edu/max/>.

Guidelines for Papers

This Fall you will submit all work digitally.

You should submit your written assignments as PDFs, unless otherwise specified.

Papers must be double-spaced, punctuated in standard U.S. English, responsive to all aspects of the assignment, including word limits (please put a word count on the front page), and prepared according to MLA style (see [Purdue's MLA formatting guide](#) for reference). Make sure that you document every reference, whether quotation or paraphrase, including page numbers whenever possible. Take time to plan your papers, and to revise them. Remember that you are responsible for saving a copy of your work file.

Here are some key tips, based on our experience with college-level writers: Feel free to write in the first person. Support claims that are common knowledge with evidence, and base your conclusions on strong arguments. Avoid hyperbolic words like “extremely.” In general, paraphrase rather than quote, unless the language to which you are referring is particularly distinctive; this gives you more control over the flow of the argument. Avoid internal ellipses, which make writing more difficult to read; use paraphrases instead. Do not use dictionaries as sources unless they are scholarly (preferably, the Oxford English Dictionary) and you are using them to highlight changing or nuanced meanings of words, or unless you are analyzing the dictionary itself. On the other hand, DO define terms whose definitions are controversial or obscure--preferably in your own words, with the working definition you are deploying in your paper. (This is particularly useful for complex theoretical concepts). A major writing problem of Macalester students is wordiness; comb your paper for possibilities for cuts and condensations.

Please see us if you have questions about our standards or about any of your grades. Here are our general grading standards:

- ❖ An “NC” paper demonstrates that the writer has little, if any, understanding of the concepts of the course. Because of the writer’s lack of skill or concern, the work includes

large-scale errors as well as a conspicuous lack of content. Documentation is negligible. The paper may also fail to address parts of the assignment.

- ❖ A “D” paper demonstrates that the writer has only minimal understanding of the concepts of the course. Significant gaps in the writer’s comprehension indicate the need for more study. The paper shows the writer’s basic compositional skills are below satisfactory for college work. Documentation is unsatisfactory.
- ❖ A “C” paper demonstrates that the writer has understood most of the concepts of the course, but needs to pay more attention to detail in reading or writing. Documentation is erratic.
- ❖ A “B” paper demonstrates that the writer has understood the concepts of the course, has a sense of their complexity, and has applied them with some originality. The paper shows the writer can organize a coherent essay with few mechanical errors. The thesis statement is clear, responsive to the assigned topic, and supported with logical argumentation, including relevant evidence. The paper for the most part includes adequate documentation.
- ❖ An “A” paper demonstrates that the writer has not only mastered the concepts of the course, but has applied them in an imaginative and incisive way. The paper shows a command of the language that allows the writer to articulate worthwhile ideas or perceptions clearly, effectively, in detail, and with virtually no mechanical errors. There is grace to the sentence structure, which is clear and varied throughout. Documentation is consistent. The “A” grade is reserved for exceptional papers; “A-” papers tend to be exceptional in part but marred by one or two problems.

Moodle

The weekly schedule and all assignments will be posted to Moodle (<https://moodle.macalester.edu/>). You will also upload completed assignments to the site.

Writing Support

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center, located in Kagin Commons, has peer tutors available for assisting students in all stages of their writing. The Center is here to help you do your best at Macalester in meeting your own goals and highest standards. Through academic enrichment and support services, ranging from workshops to individual assistance, the MAX Center can help you excel in your academics. Please check scheduling changes and availability on [their website](#).

Disability Accommodations

We are committed to ensuring access to course content for students. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Disability Services office by emailing disabilityservices@macalester.edu, or calling 651-696-6874 to schedule an appointment to discuss your individual needs. It is important to meet as early in the semester as possible; this will ensure that your accommodations can be implemented early on. For more information, please visit: <https://www.macalester.edu/disabilityservices/>.

Health and Well-Being Statement

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, financial, etc., and how they can have an academic impact. We encourage you to remember that sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you succeed at Macalester.

We also acknowledge that living through a global pandemic and a national moment of beginning to reckon with the US's foundational, structural racism adds layers of pressure, much of which is not evenly distributed, on individuals. These are times in which we all need to extend extra care and grace to ourselves and each other.

If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please reach out to one of the many campus resources that are available to you, or seek out your professors, who can help direct you to additional support systems. Macalester wants every student to be successful, and has many individuals and offices whose function is to support the academic, mental, and physical health of all students. Here is a comprehensive list of [Macalester Resources for Current Students](#), which includes everything from food to dorm & campus life to academics. Because physical and mental health and wellness may be of particular focus this year, we are including more information about its services below.

On-Campus Resources

Laurie Hamre Center for Health & Wellness
Leonard Center Room 53
651-696-6275
www.macalester.edu/healthandwellness/

- Medical Services
 - There is no charge for an office visit to see a nurse, nurse practitioner, or doctor for most appointments at the HWC. Call 651-696-6275 to make an appointment. The Center is generally open from 9 or 10am until 4:45pm on weekdays. Hours may vary this semester, based on public health concerns, so call or check the [website](#) for current information.
- Counseling Services
 - Health & Wellness counselors provide short term counseling to students. Call 651-696-6275 to arrange a meeting with a Care Coordinator to determine the best course of action for you.
 - Drop-in counseling sessions are available each day on a first-come, first-served basis. Arrive up to 30 minutes prior to the drop-in time to reserve your spot.

- Counseling staff offers multiple counseling groups each semester. Check the Health & Wellness website for more information on specific groups being offered this semester.
- Hours (may be subject to change due to public health concerns):
 - M, F: 9:00 am - 4:45 pm
 - T, W: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm
 - Th: 10:00 am - 7:00 pm
- Stress Reduction Resources
 - Health Promotion
 - Provides a variety of resources and events, including free physical activity classes, tea, sleep masks, earplugs, and sexual health resources
 - Check the Mac Daily regularly to stay updated on events, visit the Wellness Lounge in Leonard Center room 55 (across from Studio 2) for resources, or email healthpromotion@macalester.edu for more information.
 - PAWS @ Mac (therapy dog program)
 - To learn more about when and where to find the therapy dogs, email paws@macalester.edu, or follow [pawsatmac](#) on Instagram or Facebook.

After Hours and Off-Campus Resources

In cases of a life-threatening emergency, call 911.

Macalester Security

- Call 651-696-6555 in the case of any emergency to be connected with Macalester Security. They can connect you with other campus response personnel.
- On Friday and Saturday nights (11pm - 3am), student EMTs are on call, and can respond to health-related emergencies.

Press 2 - Phone Mental Health Counseling

- To speak to a mental health counselor after hours, call 651-696-6275, then press “2” to be connected to ProtoCall, a free phone counseling service that Macalester provides for students, available 24/7.

Urgent Care Clinics

- Urgent care facilities can be useful for cases when Health & Wellness is closed and you believe the medical condition is severe enough that it cannot wait. If the Urgent Care facility is not open, contact a hospital emergency room.

Urgent Care Clinic - Fairview Urgent Care

2155 Ford Parkway

St. Paul, MN 55116

651-696-5070

Allina Health Urgent Care – Bandana Square
1021 Bandana Blvd E
First floor
St. Paul, MN 55108
651-241-9700