



The University of Haifa
Haifa Center for German and European Studies

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M.A., Online Course Mondays 17:30-19:00, 2018/2019, Semester 2

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Proposed Online Course: **Human/Nature: Germany, Europe, and the Good News About Climate Change**

Course Description:

Climate Change is here. Whereas not too long ago it was discussed as something our grandchildren would have to worry about we are now already feeling the effects of it around the globe. From increased storms and flooding to melting ice caps, rising sea levels to ocean acidification—the loss and damage are devastating. Ever since NASA's James Hansen informed the US Congress of scientists' growing consensus about the manmade nature of climate change in 1988, and since the UN began its struggle to address the problem with its climate summit in Rio in 1992 nations around the world have grappled with how to maintain/improve living standards while reducing their carbon footprint. The Paris Agreement, signed by 197 countries, aims to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Centigrade compared to the beginning of the industrial age. The most recent report by the IPCC (2018) confirms that in order to meet that goal, drastic action is called for within the next twelve years. Yet emissions continue to rise, and despite Germany's achievements with renewable energy and the fact that China and India are seeing the highest increases in emissions overall, Americans and Europeans continue to be by far the biggest polluters per capita (apart from very small Middle-eastern countries like Qatar).

At the same time we're seeing the success of a fabricated "debate" about the facts, spurred by fossil-fuel funded think tanks (see *Merchants of Doubt*) which led the US to withdraw from the Paris Agreement – the only country to do so (so far).

The high cost of addressing the problem has long been used as an argument by opponents of climate action. Yet the cost of damages caused by extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change is rising every year: In the US alone such costs accumulated to a total of \$1.3 trillion between 1980 and 2017 according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ([NOAA](#)) – not even including the damages incurred in the second half of 2017.

Many are looking to Europe for guidance and inspiration on how to tackle the problem of climate change. Europeans have largely accepted the reality of climate change, and many European governments are contributing significant funds to study climate change mitigation to curb CO2 emissions and adaptation to build resilience. The European Union is committed to spending at least 20% of its budget on climate. Denmark plans to be 100% powered by renewable energy by 2050.

What led Germany to shoulder the start-up cost of the renewable energy revolution? What preconditions must be met that politicians will act in the best interest of the people? What can we learn from Germany/Europe about climate action?

An issue like climate change suffers in part from the fact that those who understand its intricacies best (the scientists) tend to be least prepared/willing to communicate them. Only through close cooperation of science, social science, humanities and creative arts can a problem of this magnitude be appropriately addressed.

In the coming weeks we will investigate how this works in the European context: How did European discourses about climate change evolve? How have Europeans addressed the issues in the media, in politics, economics, art, literature, and film? What are the historical roots of these discourses? How did these result in political and policy directions? What role can the humanities play in helping us understand the problem and develop solutions?

Goals/Outcomes:

This class aims to introduce you to the global problem of climate change and proposed solutions through the lens of the humanities, highlighting German/European perspectives. You will leave this class with an understanding of the specific historical trajectory of German and European responses to environmental challenges in general and climate change in particular, and why these responses differ from those in the US. You will learn about the connection between ethics and aesthetics and recognize how forms of humanistic inquiry like documentary film, nature writing, and ecocriticism complement scientific and journalistic work, providing much needed critical reflection of the socio-political and economic processes affecting humanity today.

Assignments and Assessment

- According to University regulations, students must attend at least 80% of the sessions to pass the course.
- Participation in class (15%)
- 1 Class presentation (15%)
- 10 Brief written reading responses (20%)
- Take-home exam (50%)

Semester Syllabus

I. Climate Change – an Issue for the Humanities

S1 Mon Feb 25 Introduction. Imagining Climate Change.

Philippe Squarzoni: *Climate Changed. A Personal Journey Through the Science*. Graphic Novel. (2014), 6-131.
The Great Transformation. Climate – Can We Beat The Heat? (WGBU, 2014)

Optional: David Archer/Stefan Rahmstorf: *The Climate Crisis: An Introductory Guide to Climate Change*. (2010).

S2 Mon Mar 04 Philippe Squarzoni: *Climate Changed*, pp.132-467.

S3 Mon Mar 11 Amitav Ghosh: *The Great Derangement*.

II. A Closer Look at Germany's Path to Climate Leadership

S3 Mon Mar 18 Joseph von Eichendorff: *Life of A Good-for-Nothing* (1826).

S4 Mon Mar 25 Timothy Snyder: 'Conclusion: Our World' in: *Black Earth. The Holocaust as History and*

Warning. p.319-344;

Optional: Franz-Josef Brüggemeier et al: “Introduction” of *How Green Were the Nazis? Nature, Environment, and Nation in the Third Reich*. Ohio University Press 2005, p.vii-17.

S5 Mon Apr 1 ‘Atomkraft, Nein Danke’. Chernobyl, nuclear energy, and the birth of the German environmental movement.

Christa Wolf: *Accident. A Day’s News*. A Novel. (1989);

Doris Dörrie: *Fukushima, Mon Amour*.

S6 Mon Apr 8 The Energiewende

Craig Morris/Arne Jungjohann, *Energy Democracy. Germany’s Energiewende to Renewables* (2016);

Carol Hager, Christoph H. Stefes, *Germany’s Energy Transition. A Comparative Perspective*. (2016) Excerpts.

Optional: Sabine von Mering: *International Green Politics* (2002).

III. The Ethics of Climate Change

S7 Mon Apr 15 Denial: Behind the Right-Wing Assault on Climate Science

Matthew Lockwood: ‘Right-Wing Populism and Climate Change: Exploring the Linkages.’ (Paper presented at Political Studies Association Annual Conference, Glasgow, UK, April 2017)

Naomi Klein: *This Changes Everything. Capitalism vs the Climate*. (2014) Excerpt.

Film: *Merchants of Doubt*.

S8 Mon Apr 29 Climate and Violence

Harald Welzer: *Climate Wars. What People Kill For in the 21st Century*. (2011) Excerpt.

Film: *The Age of Consequences* (2016).

S 9 Mon May 06 Cli-fi

Emmi Itäranta: *Memory of Water* (Finland; 2012); Film: *Thule/Tuvalu* (Germany/Tuvalu, Greenland, 2015).

S10 Mon May 13 Food, Health, Consumption

Film: *Meat the Truth* (2007, by the Party for the Animals, The Netherlands)

Film: *Plastic Planet*. (dir. Werner Boote, Austria, 2011)

Film: *Frightened. The Real Price of Shipping* (Dir. Denis Delestrac, 2016)

Szilard Podruzsik and Olaf Pollmann: “The European Union as a Player in the Global Food Security”, In: *Climate Change, Food Security, and Natural Resource Management* (Mohamed Behnassi, Olaf Pollmann, Himangana Gupta (eds), 2019. p.149-162.

IV. Climate Justice and the Economy- A World of Solutions

S 11 Mon May 20 Alternatives to Growth

Markus Brand, Ulrich Wissen: *The Limits to Capitalist Nature. Theorizing and Overcoming the Imperial Mode of Living*. (transl.: 2018)

Christian Felber, *Change Everything. Creating an Economy for the Common Good*. (Vienna, 2012);

Niko Paech: *Liberation from Excess: The Road to A Post-Growth Economy*;

Giacomo D’Alisa et al, *Degrowth. A Vocabulary for a New Era*. (2015) Excerpts.

S12 Mon May 27 Film *Demain* [Tomorrow] (France; 2015)

S13 Mon Jun 3 From ‘Transition UK’ to *Ende Gelände*: Grassroots climate activism/Civil Disobedience [watchdisobedience.com]; reducing carbon in our lives: ecovillages and urban solutions;

Film: *Menschen—Träume—Taten* [Humans—Dreams—Actions] (Germany; 2007).

Entire Books required:

Joseph von Eichendorff: *Life of a Good-For-Nothing*.

Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement. Climate Change and the Unthinkable*.

Emmi Itäranta: *Memory of Water*.

Philippe Squarzoni: *Climate Changed. A Personal Journey Through the Science*.

Christa Wolf: *Accident. A Day's News*.

The Great Transformation. Climate – Can We Beat The Heat? (WGBU, 2014)

All other Readings and Films will be made available electronically.