

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, KANPUR

Proposal for a New Course

1. Course No: ENG1XX

2. Course Title: Introduction to Environmental Humanities

3. Per Week: Lectures: 3 (L), Tutorial: 1 (T), Laboratory: 0 (P), Additional Hours [0–2]: 0 (A), Credits (3L+2T+P+A): 11

Duration of Course: Full Semester

4. Proposing Department/IDP: Humanities and Social Sciences

Other Departments/IDPs which may be interested: Earth Sciences; Biological Sciences and Bioengineering; Sustainable Energy Engineering; and other interdisciplinary programmes concerned with environment, sustainability, and climate studies.

Other faculty members interested in teaching proposed course: NA

5. Proposing Instructor(s): Dr T. Ravichandran

6. Course Description

This course introduces Environmental Humanities (EH) as an interdisciplinary field that brings the humanities into sustained conversation with environmental sciences and other modes of ecological inquiry. It examines how literature, film, visual culture, digital media, philosophy, history, anthropology, ethics and cultural practices shape understandings of nature, environment, climate and the more-than-human world. The course asks how environmental crises are narrated, experienced, remembered and contested, and how humanities perspectives can contribute to environmental thought, justice and possible futures.

The course begins by interrogating the nature–culture divide and the emergence of environmental humanities, before moving through ecocriticism, environmental imagination, place and landscape, the Anthropocene and its critical alternatives, environmental justice, postcolonial and decolonial ecologies, ecofeminism, posthumanism, new materialism and multispecies studies. It further examines environmental governance, ecological citizenship, Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge systems, environmental communication, and public humanities approaches to ecological challenges. It also introduces focused approaches such as slow violence, toxicity and waste studies, Blue Humanities, environmental memory, ecocinema, ecomedia, ecopoetics and speculative/climate fiction. Attention is also given to contemporary concerns including extinction studies, energy humanities, disaster humanities, urban ecologies, and digital environmental cultures.

Attention will be given to Indian and South Asian environmental contexts, including environmental movements, extractivism, pollution, water and agrarian crises, displacement, ecological inequality and the cultural politics of environmental change. Students will engage with literary texts, films, visual archives,

media representations, and public environmental debates to understand how ecological issues intersect with questions of caste, class, gender, indigeneity, development, and sustainability.

The course will ultimately consider questions of environmental ethics, stewardship, sustainability, resilience, ecological hope and more-than-human futures. Throughout, literary, cinematic, visual, and other cultural texts will serve as primary sites for developing critical environmental thinking.

A) Objectives

1. Introduce students to the emergence, scope, vocabulary and interdisciplinary character of Environmental Humanities.
2. Examine how cultural narratives and aesthetic forms shape perceptions of nature, environment, climate change and ecological crisis.
3. Develop familiarity with major approaches including ecocriticism, environmental ethics, the Anthropocene, environmental justice, ecofeminism, posthumanism, new materialism and multispecies studies.
4. Interrogate the nature–culture divide and rethink human exceptionalism through more-than-human and relational approaches.
5. Explore the spatial and temporal scales of environmental change, including place, landscape, bioregionalism, planetary thinking, slow violence and environmental memory.
6. Examine the cultural, political and ethical dimensions of pollution, toxicity, waste, extraction, resource depletion and environmental health.
7. Introduce Blue Humanities, ecomedia, ecocinema, ecopoetics and other emerging modes of environmental cultural analysis.
8. Situate environmental humanities within Indian and South Asian contexts, with attention to environmental justice, colonialism, caste, class, gender, indigeneity and uneven vulnerability.
9. Enable students to critically evaluate competing ideas of sustainability, conservation, stewardship, development and ecological futures.
10. Develop the capacity to connect humanities-based environmental inquiry with ethical reflection, public engagement and imaginative forms of ecological worldmaking.

B) Contents

S. No.	Broad Title	Major Topics / Areas of Coverage	Lectures
1	Introduction to Environmental Humanities	Origins and scope of EH; interdisciplinarity; humanities and the environment; nature–culture divide; environmental imagination; ecological crisis; Anthropocene as a humanities problem.	04
2	Ecocriticism,	Ecocriticism; literature	04

	Environmental Imagination and Eco-Storytelling	and environment; nature writing; pastoral and wilderness; environmental representation; narrative, scale and perspective; place, landscape and bioregionalism.	
3	Anthropocene and Planetary Thinking	Anthropocene debates; human agency and planetary change; Capitalocene, Plantationocene and Chthulucene; planetary scale; climate change; ecological limits; slow violence and imperceptible crisis.	05
4	Environmental Justice, Political Ecology, Indigenous Knowledge, and Decolonial Ecologies	Environmental inequality; extractivism; development and displacement; environmental racism; colonial/postcolonial ecologies; Indigenous and local ecological knowledge; caste, class, gender and environmental justice.	05
5	Posthumanism, New Materialism and the More-than-Human	Human exceptionalism; posthumanism; relationality and material agency; vibrant matter; transcorporeality; animals, plants, microbes and multispecies coexistence; ethics of more-than-human worlds.	05
6	Toxicity, Waste, Health and Ecological Violence	Pollution and toxic environments; agrochemicals; waste cultures; environmental health; slow calamity; necropolitical ecologies; industrial	04

		disasters, environmental horror, Ecogothic and dark ecology.	
7	Water, Oceans and Elemental Ecologies	Blue Humanities; rivers, oceans, wetlands and coastal worlds; hydrological imaginaries; water scarcity and justice; elemental ecocriticism; space ecology and planetary interconnections.	03
8	Environmental Memory, Media and Representation	Memory, disaster, loss and recovery; environmental heritage; ecocinema; photography and visual culture; ecomedia; digital environments; ecopoetics; representing invisible and slow ecological crises.	03
9	Indian and South Asian Environmental Humanities	Environmental histories and movements; Chipko, Narmada, Bhopal and extractive landscapes; agrarian and water crises; climate vulnerability; South Asian literature and cinema; caste, class, gender and indigeneity.	04
10	Ecological Futures, Ethics and Cosmogenic Hope	Environmental ethics; sustainability and its critiques; conservation versus stewardship; climate fiction and speculative futures; ecological resilience; hope and despair; decolonial and more-than-human futures; ecological worldmaking.	03

Total: 40 Lectures

C) Prerequisites

None.

D) Short Summary for Courses of Study Booklet

An interdisciplinary introduction to Environmental Humanities, this course examines how literature, film, visual culture, history, philosophy, ethics, media, and other cultural forms interpret, represent, and respond to environmental change and ecological crisis. It considers how culture shapes public understandings of nature, climate, development, technology, sustainability, and the relationship between human and more-than-human worlds.

The course introduces major concepts and debates in the field, including ecocriticism, environmental imagination, environmental justice, Anthropocene studies, posthumanism, new materialism, multispecies studies, toxicity and waste, Blue Humanities, environmental memory, ecocinema, environmental media, Indigenous ecological knowledge, climate fiction, and ecological futures. Students explore how stories, images, archives, landscapes, and media practices reveal unequal environmental burdens, contested ideas of progress, and the ethical challenges posed by climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, extraction, and resource depletion.

Through global, Indian, and South Asian case studies, the course pays particular attention to the cultural and political dimensions of environmental inequality, displacement, disaster, water, forests, coasts, urban ecologies, and rural livelihoods. It examines how colonial histories, capitalism, caste, gender, class, race, indigeneity, and geopolitics influence both environmental harm and possibilities for ecological care. By bringing together critical theory with creative and cultural texts, students develop the tools to analyse sustainability, justice, responsibility, resilience, and collective futures in an era of rapid planetary transformation.

7. Recommended Books

Textbooks / Core Readings

A curated list of literary and critical readings will be made from the following materials

- Banerjee, Sarnath. *All Quiet in Vikaspuri*. Harper Collins India, 2015.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination*. Harvard University Press, 1995.
- Carson, Rachel. "A Fable for Tomorrow." In *Silent Spring*. Penguin Classics, 2000.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2012.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Gufran, Alina, ed. *Earthbound: Climate Stories from South Asia*. Storiculture Network, 2025.
- Heise, Ursula K. *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Kamala, Markandaya. *Nectar in a Sieve*. Penguin India, 2007.
- Mangad, Ambikasutan. *Swarga: A Posthuman Tale*. Juggernaut, 2017
- Naidu, Sarojini. *The Bird of Time*. Mint Editions, 2021.

- Nixon, Rob. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.
- Heise, Ursula K., Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Routledge, 2017.
- Ramanujam A. K. "A River." In *The Striders*, Oxford University Press, 1966.
- Sinha, Indra. *Animal's People*. Simon & Schuster, 2016.
- Tomy, Sheela. *Valli*. Harper Perennial, 2022.

Reference Books / Selected Readings

- Adamson, Joni, and Michael Davis, eds. *Humanities for the Environment: Integrating Knowledge, Forging New Constellations of Practice*. Routledge, 2016.
- Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Polity, 2013.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, and Lowell Duckert, eds. *Elemental Ecocriticism: Thinking with Earth, Air, Water, Fire*. University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*. Longman, 1999.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press, 2016.
- Heise, Ursula K., Jon Christensen and Michelle Niemann, eds. *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Routledge, 2017.
- Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2015.
- Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.
- Plumwood, Val. *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. Routledge, 2002.
- Rust, Stephen, Salma Monani, and Sean Cubitt, eds. *Ecomedia: Key Issues*. Routledge, 2016.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. Zed Books, 1988.
- Slovic, Scott. *Going Away to Think: Engagement, Retreat, and Ecocritical Responsibility*. University of Nevada Press, 2008.
- Trexler, Adam. *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change*. University of Virginia Press, 2015.

Suggested Films/Documentaries

- *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006)
- *Manufactured Landscapes* (2006)
- *All That Breathes* (2022)
- *Nero's Guests* (2009)

- *Kadvi Hawa* (2017)
- *A Life on Our Planet* (2020)

8. Other Remarks

The course is designed as an interdisciplinary, introductory-level Environmental Humanities offering for undergraduate students across disciplines. It combines conceptual/theoretical discussion with close reading and interpretation of literary, cinematic, visual and other cultural texts. The design draws on established Environmental Humanities curricula that emphasize eco-storytelling, ecocinema and ecomedia, nature–culture relations, environmental justice, slow violence, multispecies coexistence, Blue Humanities, Indigenous/Asian ecological traditions, environmental ethics and possible futures. It also incorporates the literature-oriented strengths of existing environmental humanities courses, particularly environmental representation, environmental justice, global environmental literature and the intersections of ecological issues with race/class/gender/geographical location

Pedagogically, the course may include short critical responses, close-reading exercises, visual/media analyses, group presentations and a final research or creative project. Such activities are consistent with the interdisciplinary and practice-oriented models represented in the supplied syllabi.

Dated: 15-09-2026

Proposer: Dr T. Ravichandran

Signature: T. Ravichandran

DUGC Convener: _____

Approved by DCC/BAC/Senate: _____