

IDH 3931: The World to Come: Images of Climate Change

Professor Terry Harpold

Fall 2018

Time: W, per. 8 (3–3:50 PM)

Location: Harn Museum, Room G053

Course Description

We live in an age of growing ecological instability. Climate change, accelerating environmental degradation, and mass extinction are reshaping the collective futures of humans and other living things of the Earth on a scale that is without precedent in the memories of our civilization and our species. As we enter this new phase of the Anthropocene, the geological epoch defined by human influence, our former habits of mind and body are increasingly incompatible with new situations on the ground, in the air, and under the water. But humans are by nature conservative and timorous; creating new habits is difficult for us, who find willful neglect, cynicism, and despair the easier solutions. In this course we will start with the fundamentally humanist conviction that how we prepare for and respond to the world to come, in practical terms, depends on how we may re-envision that world and our roles in it. Hopeful resolve to think and act differently, and the ability to do so, come to us first by way of the creative imagination.

Our model for this work of bearing witness and renewed insight will be a landmark art exhibition at UF's Harn Museum of Art, "[The World to Come](#)" (September 18, 2018 – January 6, 2019). The exhibition, which features works by more than 45 contemporary international visual artists, will challenge us to discard assumptions about human privilege and mastery of nature, to rethink the bond of humans to non-human life, and to locate an openness, wonder, and curiosity that may lead to critical reflection, shared responsibility, and the possibility of a *planetary* humanism.

The course will meet once weekly in a classroom in the Harn and we will spend much of our time in the gallery discussing individual works in the exhibition. We will also meet with the exhibit's curator and attend a two-day international symposium in mid-October featuring scholars, artists, and scientists whose research and teaching are focused on environmental crisis and the environmental imagination.