

aduate nna

How Can the Humanities Save the Planet?

June 10 – 14, 2019

Venice International University Isola di San Servolo, Venice

VIU Graduate Seminar

How can the Humanities Save the Planet?

June 10 – 14, 2019

Venice International University

Scientific coordinator: Prof. Elizabeth Wallace, Boston College (USA)

This program is a VIU Global Challenges Initiative

Program

Under the ever-increasing likelihood of global climate change and resulting political instabilities, what can and should be the role of the Humanities and humanistic discourses? It might seem that scientists and social scientists are best positioned to intervene in the massive social, political, and economic transformations that are likely to occur. Yet surely humanists—with their capacity to enable sociable bonds of human connection, to provide historical context, and to explore the very definition of what it means to be human in a material world—also have an important role to play in addressing climate change. Humanistic discourses have long had the capacity to imagine the imaginable, and they have also facilitated creative alternatives and solutions at key moments of historical crisis when only the boldest and most dynamic ideas matter.

The Program will thus explore "How the Humanities can Help to Save the Planet" by bringing together a number of disciplines within the humanities—literature, philosophy, history, art, music, and so on-that evince a keen commitment to tackling the full range of challenges brought on by catastrophic climate change. Some of this humanistic scholarship may belong under the broader umbrella of what has come to be called the New Materialisms. Other work may situate itself in relation to ecological or environmental studies. Still other scholarship may turn the conversation to broader questions of the human imagination as it contemplates livable solutions for the world that is coming into being. What can innovative research in brain studies add to our understanding of human creativity? How have various academic fields, including postcolonialist and posthumanist studies, offered new vocabulary for planetary existence? What is the future of biological life in a world where robotic beings coexist with human partners?

This Graduate Seminar will be led by:

-Boston College (Prof. Elizabeth Wallace) -Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Prof. Shaul Bassi) -Tel Aviv University, Israel (Prof. Dorit Tanay)

Methodology

The one-week seminar is conceived as a series of **morning lectures** by participating faculty. Short **background readings** will be assigned in advance in preparation for the lectures. **Discussion** will follow the morning lectures.

The afternoon will feature small **working groups** dedicated to the creation of position papers both articulating specific questions and proposing the kinds of curricular materials that would serve to answer the questions. Participants will be encouraged to think as broadly as possible about where ideas can go next. How do we share insights and integrate new work into our classrooms and our communities, both large and small? How do we articulate what we, as humanists, have to offer?

Venice itself offers a case study in an imperiled location. At the same time it showcases an extraordinary history of human accomplishment. The city of Venice harks back to a moment when humanistic and scientific communities were seen not in opposition to one another, but as working towards a holistic social vision.

Because the seminar will take place during the **2019 Biennale of Art**, we also plan to make use of the many unique artistic opportunities available in the city at the time.

Topics

- discovering alternative worlds in the Middle Ages.
- human versus divine imagination
- breakthrough of the new science.
- the role of imagination in the early modern period.
- imagination as a tool for solving problems in early modern Europe
- scientific paradigms in historical perspective
- materialist vitalism
- materialism and agentic capacity
- new materialist approaches to the environment
- humanism and environmentalism
- climate change and the imagination
- fiction and climate change
- environmentalism and time
- environmentalism and social justice

- post humanism
- pedagogies for environmental action
- contemporary art and the environment

Learning outcomes for participants:

- access to new ways to integrate a range of humanistic thoughts into their work.
 For some students, this might possibly mean new directions in research and publication. For others, it may mean sharpening an existing research agenda.
- the development of curricular materials to be deployed in a variety of settings.

Level of students and suitable fields of study

This Graduate seminar is offered to both Master's students and young researchers early in their PhD. Open to candidates from all the VIU Member Institutions from any discipline. Excellent candidates from non-member institutions will also be considered.

Fees & Grant Support

Students from the VIU member universities will pay <u>no</u> participation fees. Selected participants will receive grants to support, partially or fully, the costs of international travel and accommodation.

The participation fee for students of non-member universities is 1000,00 + VAT. The fee is inclusive of tuition, course materials, accommodation, lunches, social events and taxes. Students from non-member institutions are not eligible for VIU grant support.

Credits

Participation in the Graduate Seminar is considered equivalent to 2 ECTS.

The final program will be available on the VIU website

Applications January 20 – February 28, 2019 via the VIU website.

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate's research topic, a curriculum vitae and a photo.

Global Challenges Initiatives

The Graduate Seminar is part of the VIU Global Challenges Initiatives, a coordinated stream of activities, inspired by similar ambitions to contribute to the creation of knowledge, understanding, and skills, responding to current and future major societal challenges faced by humankind today: environmental, social, cultural and technological phenomena and their local impacts.

Knowledge creation across the disciplines - the humanities, social sciences, and the sciences - can play a fundamental role in coping with these challenges. Within an evolving and unconstrained ensemble of topics addressed by VIU member institutions, the Initiatives identify core interests of global and local relevance with the aim to make VIU an innovator.

Through these Initiatives VIU is committed to a critical exploration of what it means to envision a sustainable future. The Initiatives acknowledge the interconnected and intertwined relationships between human and natural systems and aim to be multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

Location





Venice International University Isola di San Servolo 30133 Venice Italy T +39 041 2719511 F +39 041 2719510 www.univiu.org E summerschools@univiu.org