

# High-Tech Environmentalism

Professor Carruth  
Fiat Lux Seminar  
Spring 2015

OFFICE HOURS:  
W 2-4 pm in Humanities 262  
Sign up at [allisoncarruth.com/officehours](http://allisoncarruth.com/officehours)

## OVERVIEW

This course will explore the following question: how do digital media and new technologies shape environmentalism in the twenty-first century? In addressing this topic, we will examine short readings along with visual art, science writing, social media campaigns, documentary film and video projects. From the World Wildlife Fund's interactive website to environmental activism and art related to the Los Angeles River, our examples will introduce students to the history of U.S. environmentalism while thinking about the roles that writing and visual art along with science and technology have played in that history. The class also aims to engage students in thinking deeply about how the digital age is influencing ideas about wilderness, biodiversity, food, climate change and other major environmental issues of the twenty-first century. *Class meets on April 6, 20, May 4, 18, and June 1 in Humanities A32.*

## EXPECTATIONS

Fiat Lux seminars are one-unit, P/NP classes. For each of our four seminars after the introductory class, the expectation is that you dedicate 2-3 hours to reading/viewing the assigned materials and completing the short exercise (if any). In addition, you should come to class each week ready to engage in a lively discussion about the assigned materials. Attendance is required; more than one absence, given we meet just five times, will result in a grade of NP.

## SCHEDULE

*Materials and links found on our CCLE course website, organized by week.*

April 6

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### TOPICS

- Course Introduction
  - Key questions: What do our keywords mean to you? Why are “nature” and “technology” often imagined to be at odds? What environmental issues or ecosystems have you most learned about through digital technology and media rather than firsthand experience?
- Wilderness, Climate Change and Digital Media
  - The Extreme Ice Survey
  - The role of visual media in communicating climate science

### MATERIALS

- In-class film screening and discussion of *Chasing Ice*

April 20

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**TOPICS**

- Biodiversity
- Endangered species and multimedia environmental conservation

**ASSIGNED MATERIALS (links on course website)**

- VIEW: *Last Chance to See* Video Clips
- BROWSE: IUCN Red List, Ivory-Billed Woodpecker & Homo Sapiens entries
- EXPLORE: World Wildlife Fund Website

**EXERCISE**

Write a one-page reflection OR create a short video (1-2 minutes max.) in which you respond to the following questions. Bring your reflection to class or email Professor Carruth the link to your video.

How do you define “wildlife”? Describe an animal that you have never seen or interacted with firsthand that inspires your interest, curiosity and concern. How have you learned about that animal? What fascinates you about it? What images or other media have influenced how you think about it?

May 4

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**TOPICS**

- Case study: De-extinction research and rhetoric
- Forms of environmentalism: conservation, restoration, adaptation, resilience and synthesis

**ASSIGNED MATERIALS (links on course website)**

- READ: Nathaniel Rich, “The Mammoth Cometh” (2014)
- VIEW: Stewart Brand, “The Dawn of Extinction,” TED Talk (2013)
- EXPLORE: National Geographic, De-extinction site

**EXERCISE**

In your assigned group, brainstorm 1 idea for next week’s class: identify a topic along with a short video, audio, essay or website to assign the entire class. Email the topic and suggested assigned item to Professor Carruth.

May 18

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TOPICS AND MATERIALS DECIDED BY YOU THIS WEEK

June 1

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**TOPICS**

- Environmental activism and advocacy online
- Environmental impacts of digital technology

**ASSIGNED MATERIALS (links on course website)**

- EXPLORE: The Real Food Challenge site
- EXPLORE: 350.org
- EXPLORE: Play the LA River social media wall
- READ: Carruth, “The Digital Cloud and the Micropolitics of Energy”