COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title		Code
POSTHUMAN TURN IN NORDIC-BALTIC SEA REGION'S LITERATURE AND FILM (CORE COURSE)		

Academic staff	Core academic unit(s)
Coordinator: assoc. prof. dr. Ieva Steponavičiūtė-Aleksiejūnienė **Other(s):** assoc. prof. dr. Atėnė Mendelytė, PhD student Mikael Schultz Rasmussen, PhD student Radvilė Musteikytė	VU Faculty of Philology

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
Master	Optional

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Lectures, seminars, tutorials, individual work	Spring	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites: none	**Co-requisites (if relevant): none**

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	138	48 (including experiential learning in and outside the class)	90

Goals of the course
The course aims to explore the post-anthropocentric and posthuman turn in literature and creative media from the countries of the region, examining how these works deal with human exceptionalism and reimagine relationships between humans, nonhumans, and the environment. Students will analyse examples with regard to their ability and ways to challenge traditional anthropocentric narratives, focusing on questions, such as interconnectedness, ecological ethics, and the agency of nonhuman entities. A key goal is to contextualize these cultural productions within global discourses on posthumanism while highlighting how regional and national cultures and ecologies shape their distinct interpretations. The course aims to cultivate a nuanced understanding of how literature and creative media can contribute to reimagining the future of coexistence in the Anthropocene and beyond, while encouraging students to engage with interdisciplinary approaches, drawing from philosophy, ecocriticism, media studies and more. Ultimately, the course seeks to foster critical thinking about the ethical and philosophical implications of decentring the human in creative expression.

NB. A more specific version of the course content and assignments is available on the VU Teams / Moodle platform.

General skills:
Analytical, critical and creative thinking: to critically evaluate, systematize and process information from various sources; to improve existing and generate new ideas.
Problem-solving, social and communicative skills: to identify relevant problems to be solved, to discuss alternative choices; to offer and apply problem-solving solutions; to make informed decisions, based on facts and experience; to engage in constructive teamwork; to engage in dialogue and seek mutual understanding.
Academic and professional ethics: understand and respect ethical requirements; to comply with the principles of responsibility and integrity.

Subject-related skills:
Knowledge about and application of the theories and methods of the field; ability to formulate a research question and to communicate research findings to different audiences.

Learning outcomes	Study methods	Assessment methods
Students will learn and apply the main theories relevant to post-anthropocentric thought, connect theory with practice as well as develop creative and analytic skills to interpret different aspects of the studied phenomena.	Readings (about 300-400 pages), analysis of a wide range of material, if possible, participating in cultural and academic events related to the subject/ meetings with stakeholders in the field (such as environmental advocates and policy makers); collaborative group projects and individual assignments, incorporating experiential approaches; peer to peer evaluation.	Cumulative score for portfolio assignments (Concept quiz, experiential tasks, independent analysis of texts), self-assessment, peer-review)

Topics	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Total	Self-study	Assignments
General and theoretical intro						
Diving Beyond Anthropocentrism: Introduction into the course structure and general overview of the theoretical field. Ecocriticism(s), posthumanism(s), new materialism(s): distinctions and overlaps. Posthumanism vs. transhumanism.	2			**2**	5	**NB. All assignments and readings will be specified on the course page on Moodle** Assigned readings and other preparatory work for the classroom discussion.
Beginnings of post-anthropocentric humanities: Ecocriticism as a new paradigm. From material ecocriticism to posthumanism.	2			**2**	5	
The *Anthropocene*: the concept, the term(s) and the challenge.			2	**2**	5	

Topic						
The Posthuman subject. Non-human agency and thing-power (Braidotti, Bennett, Iovino & Oppermann).			2	**2**	5	
Existential pluralism. Modes of existence (Souriau, Latour, Morton).			2	**2**	5	
Posthumanist philosophy of death: Entangled mortality (Vinciane Despret and Donna Haraway).			2	**2**	5	
Object Oriented Ontology, Speculative Realism (Harman, Heidegger, Shaviro, Meillassoux).			2	**2**	5	
Case studies from literature and other media						
The Sands of Sarasvati by Risto Isomäki as anthropocene fiction.			2	**2**	5	Assigned readings and other preparatory work for the classroom discussion.
The nonhuman in Johanna Sinisalo's fiction (Short story "Transit")			2	**2**	5	
Group analysis of a short-prose text.		2	2	**4**	5	
The onthology of death in Knausgaard's "Morning star" series			2	**2**	5	
Imagined environments and existential pluralism in selected video games			4	**4**	7	
Ecophilosophy and Black Metal: "Wolves in the Throne Room."			2	**2**	5	
Selected examples of ecocriticism and Object Oriented Ontology in video games and films.			4	**4**	7	
Methodology experiential learning and region-related tasks						
The academia and the element of play. Experiential study methods: textual interventions, creative writing inspired by field work, multisensory analysis, etc.	2	10	2	**14**	16	Smaller-scale experiential tasks relating to the region (suggested topics: Environmental Activism/"Freedom to Roam"/ Urban space from a nonhuman perspective /Animism in indigenous cultures (Sámi), etc.
Total:	6	12	30	**48**	90	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Course portfolio: cumulative assignments, analysis of texts, test of main concepts, peer-review. The assignments will be specified and discussed with the students at the very beginning of the course.		During the term	Contribution quality, collaboration, and engagement with peers and topics.

Compulsory readings NB. The extracts to be studied will be on the course moodle page

Articles/Chapters from:

Latour, Bruno. 2017. *Facing Gaia.* Translated by Catherine Porter. Polity Press.

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter*: *A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press.

Braidotti, Rosi. 2006. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. Wiley.

Chang, Alenda. 2019. *Playing Nature - Ecology in Video Games*. University of Minnesota Press.

DeLanda, Manuel. 2016. *Assemblage Theory*. Edinburgh University Press.

Despret, Vinciane. 2021. *Our Grateful Dead: Stories of Those Left Behind*. [2015]. (S. Muecke. Trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Estok, Simon C. 2009. Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness: Ecocriticism and Ecophobia. *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment, 16*(2), 203–225. https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isp010.

Glotfelty, Cheryll. 1996. "Introduction. Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis". In *The Ecocriticism Reader. Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press.

Haraway, Donna J. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Iovino, Serenella and Serpil Oppermann (eds.) 2014. "Introduction". In *Material Ecocriticism.* Indiana University Press.

Latour, Bruno. 2011. Reflections on Etienne Souriau's *Les différents modes d'existence* (S. Muecke. Trans.). In L. Bryant, N. Srnicek, & G. Harman (Eds.), *The Speculative Turn* (304–33). Melbourne: re.press.

Mendelytė, Atene. 2024. I Play, Therefore I Think: Procedural Philosophy in Remedy Entertainment's Alan Wake 2 (2023). Games and Culture, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/15554120241265775.

Noske, Catherine. 2015. Towards an Existential Pluralism: The Philosophy of Etienne Souriau. *Cultural Studies Review, 21*(1), 146-161. https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v21i1.3951

Reed, Peter, and Rothenberg, David (Eds.). 1993. *Wisdom in the Open Air: The Norwegian Roots of Deep Ecology.* University of Minnesota Press.

Optional readings

Trexler, Adam. 2015. *Anthropocene Fictions. The Novel in a Time of Climate Change.* Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press.

 erchant, Carolyn. 2020. *The Anthropocene and the Humanities. From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Oppermann, Serpil. 2016. "From Material to Posthuman Ecocriticism: Hybridity, Stories, Natures." In *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology (Vol 2)*. Berlin Boston: De Gruyter.