It is no secret that “the environment” is a complex object—so complex as to be elude definition: what do we mean when we say “environment”? What assumptions, subject-positions, habits, and methods of knowledge underlie our conceptualizations of the environment? This course considers the environment not as an object or assemblage so much as a set of methods for organizing, understanding, and representing the world’s complexity and thereby situating human and non-human practices within it. The major goal of the course is to understand how different ways of ordering and organizing environmental complexity have particular effects on the politics of humans and nature. Through class discussions, lectures, and take-home assignments, students are asked to consider how designed buildings, landscapes, and infrastructures rest on particular notions of the environment, and how environmental rectitude—or reparations—are to be considered in light of conflicting interests, complex interdependencies, and entrenches systems of power.

Learning Objectives

The primary learning objective is to expand students’ understandings of the relationships between, on the one hand, environmental interventions (in the form of architectures, infrastructures, and other forms of land use) and, on the other hand, modes of knowing, naming, and representing the human and non-human world and its relations. Toward these ends, we will interrogate the meaning and implications of terms like toxicity, pollution, population, risk, and ecology.

By the end of the course, students should be able to persuasively elaborate on the following:

- Methods used at different times and places to picture, taxonomize, analyze, organize, and make use of specific environmental and climatic phenomena as well as the terrestrial globe.
- How these different methods shape environmental interventions including—but not limited to—architecture.
- Examples of how the human organization of non-humans corresponds to that of non-humans and how these involve relations of power
- Conceptual and historical intersections between social, ecological, and economic justice
Evaluation

Credits: 2.0 = 4 hours (+/-) of homework per week plus 2 hours (+/-) class time

15%  Notes on readings, due 11:30am Thursdays. (If additional responses are submitted, I’ll drop the lowest grade for responses.)

30%  Participation in class discussions and weekly small-group in-class projects, demonstrating knowledge of assigned readings and attentiveness to classmates’ contributions*

15%  Mid-semester essay or pamphlet, due October 8, 11pm

25%  Final essay or pamphlet, due December 12, 11pm (to be confirmed)

15%  In-class research presentations (two 10-minute presentations)

Students will receive feedback on reading responses after the first few weeks of the semester. Students will receive feedback on mid-semester essay within three weeks of submission.

* The participation grade reflects the pedagogic importance of discussing readings, discussing visual material, and doing weekly small-group in-class exercises as a basis for learning. The percentage allocated to participation also reflects a post-AI shift in emphasis from reading responses (which can be easily generated by AI tools) to in-person dialogue.

Grading Scale

Refer to USC “Definition of Grades”: http://catalogue.usc.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=282

Assignments and Expectations

For more detailed descriptions of Assignments: Please see instructions in the “Assignments” folder under “Content” on Blackboard.

Participation: For each session (starting the second week of classes), you will be given a score from 0-3 based on your participation that day. Each point is equivalent to one percentage point of your final grade. The scoring criteria range from “0” (not present, not paying attention) to “3” (generally paying attention to discussions and lectures, asking and responding to questions, listening actively and responding respectfully to peers’ comments, demonstrating knowledge of readings). Attending and participating actively in at least ten out of twelve sessions (not including weeks devoted to major student presentations) will earn you the maximum of 30 out of 30 possible percentage points.

Attendance: Students are permitted two absences without documentation, except in cases of major cultural holidays (please inform instructor of such holidays a week in advance and submit reading response in advance, which, in this case, can also count as your participation grade that week). Further absences without a doctor’s note or legitimate documented reason will be penalized (see “Participation” grade above).
**Reading responses:** Most class sessions will require you to read approximately 45-60 pages of text, typically two book chapters or scholarly articles (or significant excerpts from three chapters or articles), and sometimes a short news article in addition. All readings will be posted on Blackboard at least one week prior to the reading due date. Each student is required to submit a weekly response on Blackboard, due each week Wednesday, 11:30 am. No responses can be accepted after 12pm Thursday, unless with doctor’s note or documented justification. **You are permitted to skip two responses for a total of eight responses.** Each response is graded on a scale of 0 to 5, and you will be given a cumulative grade for the responses at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. Further instructions on Blackboard. The use of Artificial Intelligence is strictly prohibited.

**Short Essays / Research Portfolios + Presentations:** Over the course of the semester students will work in and outside the classroom developing two small research portfolios (consisting of either essays, maps, or visualizations with some written component, building on in-class exercises). Students will give each other feedback during presentations. Students may work alone or in pairs.

**Late assignments:** Extensions (within reason) will be granted on an as-need basis, but these need to be requested at least 48 hours prior to the deadline. I will not chase you down for missed assignments. It is your responsibility to submit work, verify that it’s uploaded correctly to Blackboard, and notify instructor of any requirements for an extension.

**Assignment Submission Policy**

Upload all assignments to Blackboard, unless otherwise indicated. In case of technical difficulties, please e-mail assignment to instructor.

**Required and Recommended Materials**

All required readings—and some recommended readings—will be posted on Blackboard.

For in-class group assignments, you may find it helpful to bring to class sketching equipment: drawing paper, pens, markers, colored pencils, etc. This is recommended but not required.

**Academic Integrity**

**Artificial Intelligence:** Any assignment which attempts to pass off words, work, or ideas composed by software or other persons as your own work will receive a “0” on that assignment (see section on “Academic Conduct” for explanation of further consequence). This include the use of Chat GPT. You’re also discouraged from using translation software in composing your text, as the results can resemble those of Chat GPT. You’re not being evaluated on the elegance or grammatical correctness of your writing. If you have a compelling reason to use A.I. for any assignment, please consult with instructor first.

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic
misconduct is in contrast to the university’s mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity’s website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

**Course Content Distribution**

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

**Course Evaluations**

Students will be sent a link at mid-semester and end-of-semester to complete an anonymous online course evaluation.

**Readings / Calendar**
PART I: THE ORDER OF THINGS (+ THING-NESS)

ASSIGNMENT 1: Choose an “environment” and discuss how it has been formulated as such: through what taxonomies, nomenclatures, material practices, visual methods, and architectural techniques? Short proposal due Sep. 14, classroom presentation October 5, and final due October 8 with. See assignment description on Blackboard for further details and for recommended topics.

Aug. xx. INTRODUCTION

Read together in class and discuss short excerpts from:


Small group exercise: Devise a syllabus for a design course inspired by this reading (see assignment handout for more details).

Aug. xx. BEING


RECOMMENDED

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus.


Bill Brown, Other Things (University of Chicago Press, 2015).


Sep. xx. NAMING + ORDERING

If you have drawing or coloring tools, please bring to class.


**RECOMMENDED**


**PART II: MAKING ORDER + DISORDER**

**Sep. xx. POLLUTING**


**RECOMMENDED**


**5-minute STUDENT PRESENTATIONS on ASSIGNMENT 1**


**RECOMMENDED**


**WORLD-PICTURING**


**RECOMMENDED**


Paula Willoquet-Maricondi, *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

PART II: PLACES + THEIR AFFORDANCES

Oct. xx. PLACE-MAKING


RECOMMENDED


Oct. xx. NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

ASSIGNMENT 2: Choose an “environment” (you can continue with the same from assignment 1 or choose a new one) and discuss what environmental restitution might mean for that environment: what kinds of politics, techniques, and terms have been or could be involved and under what framework of justice (i.e., justice for whom or what?).

Oct. xx. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

Oct. xx. ESSAYS/PAMPHLETS DUE ON BLACKBOARD

Oct. xx. ABUNDANCE


RECOMMENDED


**Nov. xx SCARCITY**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**Nov. xx REPARATIONS (FROM RECONSTRUCTION TO THE GREEN NEW DEAL)**


**RECOMMENDED**


**Nov. xx. RECOGNITION + RESTITUTION**


**RECOMMENDED**


Nov. xx.  NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec. xx.  IN-CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Dec. xx.  FINAL ASSIGNMENTS DUE

**Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**

**Academic Integrity:**
The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university’s mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or “recycle” work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity’s website](#), and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

**Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. The [Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion.
This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

**Counseling and Mental Health** - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

**Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP)** - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

**Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX)** - (213) 740-5086
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS)** - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

**USC Campus Support and Intervention** - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

**Diversity, Equity and Inclusion** - (213) 740-2101
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost’s Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

**USC Emergency** - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.
USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.