SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

ARTS2243

WASTE AND SOCIETY

Session 2, 2013
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COURSE STAFF

Convener/Lecturer:
Name: Dr Stephen Healy
Room: MB 319
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Email: s.healy@unsw.edu.au
Consultation Times: TBD

Additional lecturer:
Name: Dr Thom van Dooren
Room: MB 323
Phone: 9385 3768
Email: t.van.dooren@unsw.edu.au
Consultation Times: Mondays 1-2pm (or email for appointment)

COURSE DETAILS

Welcome! This document provides the relevant introductory material for **ARTS 2243 Waste and Society**, one of a suite of Level Two courses offered within the Environmental Humanities undergraduate program. This course is worth 6UOC.

This course allows a multi-dimensional study of waste. We will consider the philosophy, history, politics, sociology and cultural and environmental implications of the wastes generated by human society. Dimensions and topics include: urban environments and wastes, life cycles of materials, how we make knowledge about waste, the social implications of waste management technologies, war and waste, 'legacy' issues and the 'colonisation of the future' by wastes.

Our waste stream examples will include household wastes, water and sewage, nuclear materials, dead bodies (human and not), wastes from construction, mining, agriculture and the military, e-waste, and the creation of 'wastelands' and contaminated sites.

As we ground our thinking in philosophical and historical context, we will seek out solutions to the generation of wastes and ways to manage wastes, through studying the precautionary principle, environmental justice, international waste conventions and treaties, and regulatory and community responses to waste.

Course structure
There are three key components to this course:

1. **Lectures**: There are ten core lectures in this course, delivered by a range of staff including Stephen Healy, Thom van Dooren, Paul Brown and Eben Kirksey. These lectures will explore specific waste products and problems, from a range of different disciplinary perspectives (weeks 1-10).
2. **Tutorials**: One hour, weekly tutorials are also a core component of this course. **Students are asked to complete the required reading in advance of the tutorial, so that this time can be spent discussing readings in detail** (weeks 2-10).
3. **Creative visioning exercise**: In the final two weeks of this course, group presentations will replace both the lectures and tutorials. These weeks will offer a showcase for your collective discoveries about waste, and your visions for ‘waste futures’ (weeks 11-12).
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Explain the historical, social and cultural context for the production of wastes.
2. Analyze the relationship between technology and society that allows waste streams to be generated.
3. Apply selected disciplinary approaches to the understanding of waste and society; and make a trans-disciplinary synthesis; a 'way of looking’ at wastes.
4. Apply upper level skills of critical analysis, problem solving and interpretation, inflected through imaginative and creative approaches.
5. Conduct independent research, individually and in groups, with demonstrated ability to assemble, synthesise and communicate findings and interpretations.

LEARNING AND TEACHING RATIONALE AND STRATEGIES

This will be a blended and open learning environment with students exposed to a variety of teaching methods and conceptual approaches. Students are encouraged to discuss the many issues raised in a respectful and trusting environment: were everyone is listened to and their opinion acknowledged.

Our approach to the topic of waste

If it is left 'taken for granted', waste seems like a normal part of human society. But if its impacts, both social and environmental, are confronted head on, waste is both mystifying and appalling. This course is designed to confront students with the impacts of waste. This provides a step towards an imaginative search for solutions, and imagination will play a large part in the course assignments, as will some of the methodologies of 'future studies'.

Assessment will take a variety of forms, including both conventional formats like an essay and a report, and a more creative ‘visioning exercise’ in which students will be asked to work in groups to combine disciplinary perspectives, personal reflections and their own imagination to build a picture of a society much more in control of waste. This final exercise can be approached in a variety of different ways. Through this assessment item we hope to move beyond the here and now of practical waste management, to a re-formulation of human values underpinning a different future.

There is a major challenge for students in this course: you will need to keep thinking through the themes that arise in all elements of the course, and keep asking yourselves ‘what does all this mean?’ In other words, we are challenging you to take a reflective and interpretative approach to this course.
### HOW LEARNING OUTCOMES WILL BE ACHIEVED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcome</th>
<th>Achieved through….</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Able to explain the historical, social and cultural context for the production of wastes</td>
<td>Theoretical discussions in the lectures and tutorials. Practice achieved through assignments: essay, tutorial presentation, and the final visioning exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to analyze the relationship between technology and society that allows waste streams to be generated.</td>
<td>Theoretical discussions in the lectures and tutorials. Practice achieved through assignments: essay, tutorial presentation, and the final visioning exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to apply selected disciplinary approaches to the understanding of waste and society; and make a trans-disciplinary synthesis, a 'way of looking' at wastes.</td>
<td>Guidance for this provided in lectures and tutorials; supported through the practice which resides in the assignments, especially the essay and the final visioning exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to apply upper level skills of critical analysis, problem solving and interpretation, inflected through imaginative creative and visioning approaches.</td>
<td>Self-directed research and all assignments: essay, presentations and visioning exercise. Particularly achieved through the final visioning exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to conduct independent research, individually and in groups, with demonstrated ability to assemble, synthesise and communicate findings and interpretations.</td>
<td>Self-directed research and all assignments.</td>
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## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture:</th>
<th>What is waste?</th>
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*Introduction and course overview*

**Required tutorial readings:**
No tutorial

### Week 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lecture:</th>
<th>Household waste: The constitution of self and environment</th>
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**Required tutorial readings:**

### Week 3

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<th>Lecture:</th>
<th>Urban Water</th>
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**Required tutorial readings:**
Week 4

Lecturer: Paul Brown

Lecture:

*Chemical Waste: Hexachlorobenzene and International Conventions*

**Required tutorial readings:**


**Recommended biology/environmental management reading:**

- Excerpt from the *Stockholm Convention 10th Anniversary – Major Achievements in 10 years, 2011 UNEP: up to p.8 and pp. 32-33*
  
  [www.oricabotanytransformation.com](http://www.oricabotanytransformation.com)

Week 5

Lecturer: Thom van Dooren

Lecture:

*E-waste: The lifespans of circulating toxics*

**Required tutorial readings:**

  
  Available online at: [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.9380304.0001.001](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.9380304.0001.001)
### Week 6  
**Lecture:**  
*Trash Art*

**Required tutorial readings:**  
2. Second reading TBD

### Week 7  
**Lecture:**  
*University waste: UNSW and beyond*

**Required tutorial readings:**  
4. Student survey materials (also provided via Moodle.)

### Week 8  
**Lecture:**  
*Flesh: Consuming and disposing of bodies*

**Required tutorial readings:**  
### Week 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturer: Paul Brown</th>
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<td><strong>Lecture:</strong> Nuclear waste and the ‘deep future’</td>
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<td><strong>Required tutorial readings:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Recommended biology reading:</strong></td>
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### Week 10

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<th>Lecturer: Stephen Healy</th>
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<td><strong>Lecture:</strong> Waste Futures: From Domestication to Vulnerability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Required tutorial readings:</strong></td>
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### Week 11-12:

**Waste Futures ‘Laboratory’ (Stephen Healy and Thom van Dooren)**

- In the final two weeks of the course we will explore the future of waste across both short and long timescales.
- Working in groups, students will make a presentation for discussion and reflection by the class. This assignment is the finale for the course, and you should approach it as a chance to draw together ideas, themes, your research findings, and your own sense of inquiry. More details will be given in week 6.
COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Student evaluative feedback on this course is welcome and is gathered periodically, using among other means UNSW’s Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process.

Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. Significant changes to the course will be communicated to subsequent cohorts of students taking the course.

WEBSITES

These days there are literally thousands of websites which could potentially be useful in your study of waste. How to narrow that down?

As a start, we recommend:

  a) searching the United Nations Environment Program sites on three conventions relevant to wastes: the Basel Convention, the Stockholm Convention and the Rotterdam Convention
  b) visiting the Australian Government’s site for the 2010 National Waste Report


You should also check BlackBoard for more suggested readings/sources.

ASSESSMENT

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<tr>
<th>Assessment Task</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) Essay</td>
<td>2,000 words</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Week 6 (Wednesday 4 Sept)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.) Group Project and Presentation</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>In class, weeks 11 and 12 (15 and 22 October)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.) Final Report or Essay</td>
<td>2,000 words</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Week 13 (Friday 1 November)</td>
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Please see the moodle site for this course for more information on assessment.