

## Huntington U Course on “Cli-Fi” (Climate Fiction)

Instructor: Dr. Nicole Seymour  
Thursdays 10am–12pm  
September 5-October 10, 2024



Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, *Iron Works of Coalbrook Dale in the Romantic and Picturesque Scenery of England and Wales*, 1805

### **Course description**

According to European climate scientists, July 21, 2024, was the hottest day ever recorded on Earth—until the record was broken again the very next day.<sup>1</sup> Climate change has thus become palpable to even the most privileged amongst us, though its effects have proved particularly devastating to vulnerable communities across the globe. Meanwhile, although scientific reports and models provide crucial information about the climate crisis, various humanistic artforms have taken up the mantle as well.

Across six sessions of this “Huntington U” course, participants will consider: What are the challenges and strategies of representing climate change in artforms such as literature, painting,

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://theconversation.com/monday-was-the-warmest-day-recorded-on-earth-but-how-do-scientists-actually-measure-that-235423>.

## Huntington U Course on “Cli-Fi” (Climate Fiction)

photography, and film and television? How have structures like settler colonialism, industrialization, and capitalism intersected with climate change? Whose climate stories are being represented, and how?

Sessions will include a tour of the upcoming Huntington exhibition *Storm Cloud: Picturing the Origins of Our Climate Crisis* (<https://huntington.org/exhibition/storm-cloud-picturing-origins-our-climate-crisis>) and a tour of the surrounding gardens.

### **Instructor**

Nicole Seymour is Professor of English and Graduate Advisor for Environmental Studies at California State University, Fullerton. She is the author of several books, including *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018) and *Glitter* (Bloomsbury’s Object Lessons series, 2022). She has held fellowships at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich, the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the University of Edinburgh, and a Summer 2024 Isherwood Foundation Fellowship at the Huntington Library.

### **Readings**

You will need a copy of **Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible*** and **Cherie Dimaline’s *The Marrow Thieves*** for this course. Any edition or format (eBook, audiobook, etc.) is fine. I will also be assigning a few short texts that will be circulated by email.

I recommend jotting down some notes—questions, comments, etc.—for each text so that we can make the most of each discussion. If possible, please bring those notes and a copy of the relevant text (whether electronic or hard copy) to each session.

### **Schedule**

For first class: if possible, read first half of Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible*

1. September 5: Representing climate change, periodizing climate change
  - Welcome and introductions; land acknowledgement
  - The Anthropocene and contested “golden spikes”; the Orbis Hypothesis
  - In-class reading and discussion of excerpts from Amitav Ghosh’s *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*

For next week: finish Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible*

2. September 12: Intergenerational conflict; colonization and climate change
  - Discussion of Millet
  - Youth activism and the climate *Bildungsroman*
  - Kyle Powys Whyte’s critique of climate change as “unprecedented”

For next week: read as much of Cherie Dimaline’s *The Marrow Thieves* as possible

## Huntington U Course on “Cli-Fi” (Climate Fiction)

### 3. September 19: Indigenous perspectives

- Discussion of Dimaline
- Discussion of traditional Environmental Knowledge (TEK) and climate mitigation
- Introduction to “Indigenous Futurisms”

For next week: read Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, et. al’s “Climate Reality On-Screen” and watch any post-2010 TV episode or film!

### 4. September 26: Representing climate change, redux; art vs. propaganda

- Discussion of Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, et. al
- Discussion of film and TV
- Introduction to “empirical ecocriticism”

For next week: read Melinda McCurdy and Karla Nielsen’s “Seeing through the Storm Cloud”

### 5. October 3: *Storm Cloud: Picturing the Origins of Our Climate Crisis*

- Tour of the exhibit with curators Karla Nielsen and Kristen Anthony
- Discussion of the climate impact of the exhibit

For next week: finish Dimaline if you didn’t earlier

### 6. October 10: Wrap-up

- Discussion of Dimaline as needed
- Discussion of *Storm Cloud* as needed
- Tour of the Huntington gardens with Botanical staff
- Reflections, goodbyes, and “Obligatory Note of Hope”