

ENGL 862: PLANETARITIES (Seminar in Cultural Studies), Spring 2015, UNC
Meetings: Fridays 335-625pm, Greenlaw 317, UNC Chapel-Hill
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 330-5pm, Greenlaw 419

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

Over the past decade, scholarship in the humanities and social sciences has been transformed by work that attempts to decenter the human in our conceptions of life and planet. Deeply influenced by scientific knowledge and ecological crisis, this work often highlights the interrelation of physical matter, technology, and biological life. Hailed imprecisely, under labels that suggest a methodological transition and an intellectual break with human-centered accounts of representation and materiality ("posthumanism," "the ontological turn," "the affective turn," "new materialism"), such work has focused on a wide array of topics including environmental destruction, human-animal relations, biocapitalism, changing forms of warfare, media and information ecologies, the politics of death and disability, and the social life of nonliving objects. In response to these shifts in objects and methods of inquiry, critical race, postcolonial, and indigenous scholars have begun new conversations regarding emergent "posthumanist" methods, even as they turn to their own fields to review how questions of nature, technology, embodiment, violence, relationality, and the human have been conceptualized in earlier moments of political and intellectual debate. This seminar on PLANETARITIES will explore the emergent opportunities and tensions arising from the intersection of posthuman and postcolonial knowledges, and will interrogate why scholars in the academy have at times presented these critical projects as distinct and opposed.