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Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00—12:20

## HONR-LA 2303: The Literature and Science of Environmental Crisis

Indra Sinha, the author of a novel about the Bhopal disaster has said, “the Bhopal issue is so complex, its various strands—legal, medical, social, human, environmental, political—are so intertwined that it would take a Ph.D. to unravel them.” Current environmental crises are complicated matters that require us to understand them from multiple perspectives, including those of the sciences, the social sciences, and the arts and humanities. This class will focus on how recent literary texts (as well as film, photography, and websites) portray current environmental crises. We will focus on four major issues: toxins, climate change, extinction and biodiversity, and the state of the oceans. We will explore how the literature, film, photography, and web sites portray these issues, examining how they incorporate scientific facts and frameworks, how they make different kinds of appeals to their audiences, and how they attempt to effect change. More broadly we will discuss the relationship between literature and science as well as the question of how well scientific information travels across different domains. The class will require presentations, a midterm and a final exam, a short paper, and a final project that will require cross-disciplinary research. (Students will choose the focus of their final project and choose whether to write a research paper or create a multi-media work.)

The literature includes novels, autobiographies, science writing, and science fiction, including Suzanne Antonetta, *Body Toxic*; Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People*; Mark Lynas: *High Tide: The Truth About Climate Change*; Terry Glavin, *The Sixth Extinction* or E.O. Wilson, *The Future of Life*; Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*; Ruth Ozeki, *All Over Creation*; Sylvia Earle, *The World is Blue: How Our Fate and the Oceans are One*; and Julia Whitty, *The Fragile Edge: Diving and Other Adventures in the South Pacific*. The films will include *Everything’s Cool: A Toxic Comedy about Global Warming*, *Texas Gold*; one episode of *The Blue Planet*, and the science/art films of Jean Painlevé. We will also look at activist web sites, government web sites, and scientific texts.

[Note: This is an introductory class that does not assume any advanced knowledge in either literature or science. Prerequisite: membership in the Honors College. ]

