

Anglophone Climate Change Fiction: 1960s to Today

“Climate change fiction”, (or “cli-fi”), is the postmillennial label for a growing set of novels that engage with and imagine a world shaped by anthropogenic climate change. That genre description has been extended retrospectively to earlier or founding texts, such as J. G. Ballard’s speculative novel *The Drowned World* (1962), which will be the first text we read and discuss in the seminar. Most recently, a monumental piece of fiction has been added to the genre which is about to remodel that genre’s overall shape – Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Ministry of the Future* (2020). Robinson’s novel imagines the global survival and management of climate change and will be the second set text for our seminar. Bill McKibben noted that *Ministry of the Future* “is not utopian, it’s anti-dystopian, realist to its core”. Yet in view of its diverse textual materials and voices, other critics have called it post-postmodernist.

Reading passages closely will form part of this course. To discuss the two novels in a wider context, we will acquaint ourselves with a number of concepts that have shaped the debate – from the controversial notion of the “Anthropocene” to that of a “World Ecology”. Working towards a wider understanding of the genre of climate change fiction, we will consider the *challenge of representing* climate change in literature and the arts. The debate about that challenge (fired by Timothy Morton, Amitav Ghosh, Rob Nixon and others) will help us to grasp both the potential and the limitation of “climate change fiction”.

Please note:

You will have to buy the two novels. Theoretical texts and other material will be provided online. There will also be 7 quizzes, meant as encouragement to keep up with the assigned reading, of which you will have to pass at least 6 in order to get credit for the course.

To help you organize your reading: the texts will be tackled in the following order: Ballard, *The Drowned World*; Robinson, *The Ministry of the Future*.

Credit requirements for maximum credits:

- Regular attendance
- 7 quizzes (pass 6)
- participation in an expert group with a task assigned
- possibly 3 short written responses preparatory to sessions
- Oral contributions
- Term paper

