



Instructor: **Jolene Mathieson**
Title: **The Blue Humanities**
Course: **Seminar II [ENG-7, ENG-7a, ENG-13, AA7, AA11, LAA10, LAA13, AA-MA01, AA-MA02, AA-MA03, AA-MA05]**
Number: **53–562**
Time: **Tuesdays, 10–12h**
Room: **Zoom; online only**
Starts: **03.11.2020**

Course Description:



The ocean is a realm of primordial power, a world populated by both the tiniest of microbes as well as the planet's largest animals. It is a place of jutting rocks, vast trenches and hydrothermal vents, of extreme pressure and non-prismatic light. It is a complex environment that challenges and often denies human conceptions of time, space and scale; yet its importance for all human activity cannot be overstated. The governing framework for this seminar will hence be the relatively new but rapidly expanding field of the "Blue Humanities", a field that examines and debates the culture and history of human interactions with the ocean. In a time of climate change and severe oceanic pollution, the relationship between humans and the ocean needs to be reevaluated and scrutinized. This seminar will thus study how, in the age of climate change, literary form can shape the epistemic function of an ocean increasingly at risk and how oceanographic knowledge can shape the epistemic function of the literary text. To this end, the course will include primary reading material from the social sciences, marine biology and literary fiction. We will read two short novels, one written by a practicing oceanographer that explores issues of technology and the hegemony of science as well as one Afrofuturist novel that examines the ways that the ocean is colonized, gendered and racialized. We will also read excerpted theorizations from the science-literature nexus and discuss the quality and type of knowledge it produces. The aim of this course is to introduce students to oceanic literature and thought, and to demonstrate the myriad ways we can critically engage with the ocean while also developing modes of reflection where we examine our individual responsibility to the ocean.

Requirements: The *Studienleistung* will consist of thorough preparation of all reading material, completion of weekly homework assignments and active participation. The *Prüfungsleistung* consists of a research paper, the length of which is determined by your module.

Texts: Each of you must purchase the following novel: Nnedi Okorafor, *Lagoon* (London: Hudder, 2014). All other texts will be made available at our Agora room.