

KULH2011 – The Cultural History of Nature - Spring 2021

Background

KULH 2011 is a 10-credit BA-level elective designed to introduce students to central topics, ideas, thinkers and directions in the cultural history of nature, broadly defined—equipping students with basic knowledge and critical understanding to begin navigating this complex intellectual field on their own, cultivating a sense of how past understandings of nature connect to the present, to everyday practices and institutions and to the increasingly urgent issues that we confront, both in Norway and globally, in an age of ecological turmoil.

Materials and instruction for the course present students with a wide range of writers and ideas. Much of the material focuses on the 19th to 21st centuries, including contemporary discussions of the Anthropocene, but students are encouraged to explore beyond the curriculum with topics and identify case studies that reflect their own interests. The course is open to students from a very wide range of disciplines, also outside the humanities; as it is taught in English, it also attracts a large number of overseas and exchange students.

Assignment

The course is examined by a term paper, six to eight pages in length (not including references or footnotes; a standard page at UiO is 2300 characters, not including spaces). You will submit this paper in Inspira, the university examination platform.

The term paper should present your analysis of one source of your choice.

This could be an image, a text, a material object, a practice, a heritage landscape and so on. You have great freedom in selecting what source to focus on, so feel free here to experiment and to draw on your skills, interests and prior training. Try to choose a source you feel is interesting to you and that you would like to think about. If you have questions about whether something constitutes a valid source, feel free to ask. I will schedule office hours later in the semester where those of you who want can have a quick chat about your ideas for the term paper.

Focusing on your chosen source, your analysis should discuss it in relation to

topics we have covered over the semester and that are discussed in the readings. Your analysis should draw on at least two different approaches you have encountered over the course of the semester, and discuss at least three texts you have access to in Canvas. This is a minimum, and you are of course also free to draw on sources beyond the curriculum.

Guidelines

Over the course of the semester students have been encouraged to think independently and critically, to experiment with genre, voice and literary devices, to explore a broad literature and to focus on concepts and ideas that they find interesting and productive in their own studies and research.

Many students are working with English as their second or third language, and assessment should reflect this. Overall presentation and the ability to construct an argument are important, but minor errors of spelling, grammar and syntax should not be unduly penalised. Enrolment this year also includes an unusually wide range of disciplines and levels of study: from first year students to advanced finalists or students taking the course as part of a graduate study program. This should also be considered in the assessment.