

Development in the Anthropocene (ANT002E)

1. Titre du cours:

Development in the Anthropocene (ANT002E)

2. Enseignant

Fiona Gedeon Achi

Fiona Gedeon Achi is Assistant Professor in Anthropology at UM6P. Her research focuses on international development, policymaking, and infrastructure. She has conducted fieldwork research in Kenya, India, and the United States, and has taught about anthropology and sociology in Canada, France, and Turkey. She holds a PhD degree (2020) in Anthropology from McGill University in Canada.

3. Présentation et descriptif des objectifs du module :

Global crises today defy neat categorizations. As the recent COVID19 pandemic and its management have made highly visible, the arrival of a new virus results in threats to health, tragic economic consequences for vulnerable groups, challenges to current geopolitical orders and mobility flows, or still yet uncertain environmental repercussions. Under these conditions, what does it mean to seek and practice global development? The 2020 Human Development Report “The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene” spotlighted how humans’ search for progress must also attend for Earth’s broader and nonhuman futures, at a time where human choices have been accompanied by extensive ecological risks. This course is a collaborative experiment in defining together what “sustainable development” might mean in the Anthropocene. We will read social scientists and learn about projects which have aimed to move beyond “human exceptionalism” to explore essential cohabitation between human and nonhuman worlds. We will also look at empirical studies that consider how people govern intractable problems such as climate change or waste management, but also the future, apocalypse, and the not to faraway possibilities of science fiction.

4. Organisation pédagogique du module :

This course will be highly interactive as the ultimate objective is to produce a collective report (format TBD – movie, fiction, policy report) on conception of “sustainable development” that will have been derived in class discussion and engagement with the course material. Each class session will start with an in-class debates, based on the readings assigned for the day (and prompts given by the instructor). If a teaching assistant is made available for this course, about 5-8 TD sessions would be dedicated to the collaborative elaboration and drafting of the “sustainable development report”.

5. Principales références du module :

All required readings will be made available on Canvas and online resources, such as films or websites, will be openly available. Students are encouraged to purchase the novel *Ministry for the Future*.

6. Documents complémentaires à propos du module :

7. Evaluation et notation :

Participation : 25%

Présentations et Travaux Oraux : 25%

Projets (Individuels ou en Groupe) : 25%

Examen final : 25%

8. Plan détaillé du cours :

Séances	Contenu détaillé et évaluations
Séance 1	<p>a. Titre de la séance : 2 hours Course Introduction : What is the Anthropocene?</p> <p>b. Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : The course will introduce students to the course objectives and its collaborative and experimental nature. It will detail the schedule, the evaluation expectations, as well and the “sustainable development report” class-based experiment. This session will also importantly introduce students to the concept of Anthropocene and its stakes. It will also be the occasion to get to know each other.</p> <p>c. Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : “Anthropocene”, National Geographic - https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/anthropocene/ “What is the Anthropocene and why does it matter?” Natural History Museum https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/what-is-the-anthropocene.html</p>
Séance 2	<p>Titre de la séance : 3 hours Saving the World? The next frontier</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This course will be the first jump into thinking about what it means to try to better, rescue, or improve our world today, thinking also carefully about the concept of “development”. It will start to introduce the notion of “decentering the human as the center of the cosmos”. In this session and next, we will read chapters from the 2020 Human Development Report “The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene” to discuss how policymakers and experts are thinking about the challenges of human and earth development in the Anthropocene.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : UNDP 2020 “The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene”, Overview (1-14) and Chapter I (pp.19-25).</p>
Séance 3	<p>Titre de la séance : 2 hours We have never been modern</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This course is organized around a structured discussion of anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism, modernity, nature/culture divide and the implications of these assumptions which are at the center of many of the ways in which the world is organized.</p> <p>IDEA PROPOSAL FOR REPORT DUE ON JANUARY 18 AT 11PM.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Mitchell, Timothy. 2002. « Can the mosquito speak? » in <i>Rule of Experts</i>, pp.19-38.</p>
Séance 4	<p>Titre de la séance : 3 hours Intractable problems I: climate change</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This week explore how social scientists and writers think about intractable problems, especially what they reveal about how policymakers grapple with these complex challenges.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Robinson, Kim Stanley. <i>Ministry for the Future</i>. Orbit books, 2020. Excerpts. *In class: <i>Not ok movie</i>, a little movie about a small glacier at the end of the world, 2018. Directors: Dominic Boyer and Cymene Howe. https://www.notokmovie.com/</p>
Séance 5	<p>Titre de la séance : 2 hours Post-humanism? The parliament of things</p>

	<p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This session is dedicated to learning from scholars who seek to represent the world beyond the social/nature, human/non-human divide. It examines attempts by scholars, artists, and the lay public to open “politics” to others which are non-human, or to others who are not there yet, such as future generations – for instance through concepts of intergenerational fairness. This also means looking at those scholar who emphasize how insects, plants, and other non-living things bear the mark of human presence on earth, and how they might indirectly teach to think and look otherwise.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Latour, Bruno. <i>Reassembling the Social</i>. Oxford University Press, 2005. “Introduction: How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations”, p.1-20. Also, carefully look at these resources: Carefully look at all these online resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parliament of things: https://theparliamentofthings.org/about/ • Artist Jonathon Keats – River time https://alaskarivertime.org/About <p>*Optional: Menga, Filippo, and Dominic Davies. "Apocalypse yesterday: Posthumanism and comics in the Anthropocene." <i>Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space</i> 3.3 (2020): pp.663-687.</p>
Séance 6	<p>Titre de la séance : 2 hours Human development report</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : Here, we look at and debate the strategies proposed by the UN Human Development Report to “use our power to expand human freedoms while easing planetary pressures”.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : UNDP 2020 “The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene”, Chapter 3.</p>
Séance 6	<p>Titre de la séance : 2 hours Responsibility and accountability: Capitalocene or Anthropocene?</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This session focuses on the notion of responsibility and accountability – who is responsible? who is to account? – for the Anthropocene, linking these phenomena to our broader economic system, and suggesting that Anthropocene might as well be Capitalocene – the age of capitalism.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Haraway, Donna J. <i>Staying with the Trouble</i>. Duke University Press, 2016. Chapter 2 “Tentacular thinking”, pp.30-57.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also look at this online resource: School of International Futures and their perspective on “Internegenerational Fairness”. https://soif.org.uk/igf/
Séance 7	<p>Titre de la séance : 3 hours Intractable problems 2: plastics</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This session looks at how social scientists have studied intractable problems, especially what they reveal about how policymakers grapple with these complex challenges.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Pathak, G., & Nichter, M. The anthropology of plastics: an agenda for local studies of a global matter of concern. <i>Medical anthropology quarterly</i>, 2019, 33(3), pp.307-326. *Optional: Pathak, G., & Nichter, M. <i>Plastic Pollution goes far beyond litter</i>, 2021. Accessible at http://somatosphere.net/2021/plastic-pollution.html/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Somatosphere+%28Somatosphere%29*Optional: Menga, Filippo, and Dominic Davies. "Apocalypse yesterday: Posthumanism and comics in the Anthropocene." <i>Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space</i> 3.3 (2020): pp.663-687.</p>
Séance 8	<p>Titre de la séance : 2 hours Multispecies being</p>

	<p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This session looks at what it means to think about being and ontology not only with and as humans, but within broader conceptions of the world, which might include the non-human.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Kohn, Eduardo. 2013. <i>How forests think</i>. Introduction, pp-1-26.</p>
Séance 9	<p>Titre de la séance : 3 hours Apocalypse & the shape of the future?</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This course examines how scholars have thought about the « apocalypse » as looming ever closer, and therefore influencing the shape of the future.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Latour, B., Stengers, I., Tsing, A., & Bubandt, N. Anthropologists are talking–about capitalism, ecology, and apocalypse. <i>Ethnos</i>, 83(3), 2018, pp.587-606. Movie : <i>Word without clouds</i> (2020) https://jiahuileeq.wixsite.com/clouds *Optional : Ginn, Franklin. "When horses won't eat: Apocalypse and the anthropocene." <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 105.2 (2015): 351-359.</p>
Séance 10	<p>Titre de la séance : 2 hours Course wrap-up</p> <p>Plan de la séance, objectifs et connaissances clés à acquérir : This course will serve as a conclusion, a time for students to ask questions, and also discuss about the collective report.</p> <p>Préparation de la séance, lectures et ressources web : Latour, Bruno. 2013. <i>An Inquiry into Modes of Existence</i>. Introduction.</p>

10. Activités complémentaires :

Activités	Contenu détaillé et évaluation
Activité 1	<p>In-class debates: Every week, 2-4 students will be assigned a set of readings (for a week) and might also be handed a prompt by the instructor. They will be asked to prepare a 2-3-minute presentation on the readings, which includes their understanding as well as an analytical reflection on the readings. This will then lead to a debate between the students presenting and turn into an organic debate/discussion with the whole class. The objective of this activity is to have student-centered sessions, which start from students' curiosities. Students would be asked to do this up to 2-4 times in the semester, depending on the class size.</p>
Activité 2	<p>Collective "sustainable development" report: This activity involves the whole class. After reading the Human Development Report 2020, we will develop "our own" report outlining our visions for a sustainable development, including a diagnostic of the current situation and its causes, and an outline of potential solutions and ways forward. What form the report takes (a policy report, a comic, a filmed documentary, a work of fiction, etc.) will be discussed in class. It is imperative for this experiment/assignment to be successful that everyone comes to class having carefully read all assigned texts and resources to engage actively and deeply with the class discussions, the class material, and in the class debates. The objective of this activity is to encourage students to think both imaginatively and pragmatically about the future and to do so through a setting that requires collaboration and compromises – somewhat mimicking a policymaking arena, while offering students the possibility to explore with multiple formats to think about the future. This activity will be broken down into steps throughout the semester, which will be detailed in class.</p>