

Engl 870
Spring 2023

Hope is a Place: Climate Futures, Colonial Pasts
Instructor: Margaret Linley

Just when we were seeming to come out of a global pandemic in early summer 2021, the heat dome struck BC and then came the fires and the rain. Three states of emergency declared in a single year and countless environmental records smashed. Our recent experience of what feels like landscapes in revolt raises the spectre that the land and the weather have conspired with an agency beyond our control, even as the cause is attributed to us, as human-induced climate change, and has a new geologic name, the Anthropocene. For many, there's no denying our climate future is here and now.

In this seminar, we will consider how local events involving extreme heat, wildfires, drought, record rain, and floods intensify or transform our understanding of place and unearth the extent to which our current climate crisis and sense of futurity is deeply rooted in our colonial past. We will focus on local places, like Stanley Park and Sumas Prairie for example, as concrete sites from which to launch theoretical investigations into literary and cultural connections between current, situated climate temporalities and acts of environmental devastation, exploitation, and transformation that were once celebrated as the central work of settler colonialism.

We will approach these new temporalities of place from three perspectives: how literary studies has documented and explored the histories and consequences of British dispossession of non-British peoples; how the widespread adoption of land acknowledgements modeled on Indigenous practices similarly challenges settler amnesia that fails to recognize living on ancestral territories and traditional relations to land; how weather necessitates changeability and improvisation, and produces new ecologies, imaginaries, and possibilities of place.

Readings TBA will be theoretical, historical, and literary; available on Canvas.

