

Course Number	Course Title		
ART-HIST 450	Studies in 19 th Century Art: Art and the Anthropocene		
Quarter/Year	Day/Time	Instructor	Degree/Distro Fulfillment
Spring 2021	T 2-5	Eisenman	

Course Description

"Anthropocene" is the name of the epoch in geologic history when earth systems no longer follow their natural course but are instead directed by humans. Its geologic markers, found across the globe, consist of technofossils (industrial litter deposited by rivers and streams) and radionuclides (from atomic blasts). But before it officially becomes part of the geologic time scale, the name must be adopted by the International Commission on Stratigraphy. That decision will come later this year.

The Anthropocene Working Group of the Union of Geological Sciences has proposed that the new epoch commenced in the mid-twentieth century, when a growing human population and accelerated industrial production, combined with [atomic litter](#), became embedded in sediments and glacial ice, forming part of the geologic record. Some scholars, however, have argued for a much earlier origin, perhaps the early-mid 19th Century, when the use of fossil fuels became widespread. Others have taken it back still further to early modern times, or even to antiquity.

The course will examine artworks of the past and present in order to determine their expressive location – their footprint – in the Anthropocene. Students will write a number of short papers that articulate the *anthropocenic* character of artworks they have selected from any time and culture. The papers will be read and critiqued by the whole class, and selected examples – hopefully, many of them – will be published with the student's permission on the dedicated page of the website of [Anthropocene Alliance](#). These papers may later become part of a larger digital humanities project – supervised by Professor Paul Jaskot of Duke University -- that will map the art of the Anthropocene in place and time.



Required Textbooks

Assessments

Final seminar report and written paper

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